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THE
GOSSIP'S WEEK.

A gossip's week has seven working days,
When the prayer's over, then begins the tongue
As though it were Saint Maundy;—and the night,
Which should bring Sabbath rest, must needs be spent
To swell the gallimaufry into eight.

Michael Poyner's Tragedy.

THE
GOSSIP'S WEEK.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"SLIGHT REMINISCENCES."

FAMILIAR MATTERS OF TO-DAY—
SOME NATURAL SORROW, LOSS, OR PAIN,
THAT HAS BEEN, AND MAY BE AGAIN.

Wordsworth.

WITH WOOD-CUTS FROM ORIGINAL DESIGNS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.



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CONTENTS TO VOL. II.



	PAGE.
JANET HAMILTON	1
THE STORY OF FIAMMETTA	159
THE VEILED WOMAN	217
ANTONIA	267

JANET HAMILTON.



JANET HAMILTON.



Nous sommes tous pleins d'idées accessoires.

Montesquieu.

Thy young and innocent heart,
How is it beating? Has it no regrets?

Rogers' Italy.

IN the soft month of May, when the lilacs deepen in Portman Square, and green leaves make umbrellas in the supreme Grosvenor; when spring showers freshen the turf and keep down the dust in Hyde Park, and every balcony puts forth its rich exuberance of bud and flower, London is very bright and very beautiful. Splendid equipages, matchless horses, gallant cavaliers, and magnificent women meet the eye wherever it turns, and time is trotted, yawned, or danced down, with incredible facility.

The life of a woman of fashion—if she be *in* fashion, (for it does not follow of course,) is a

splendid delirium while the season lasts, and I doubt much if the word spring carries more sunshine with it to the fancy of a poet, than to the ear of a high-bred beauty. But the images that its different significations usher in, have little to do with each other; in the country, *the spring* expresses merely the renewal of nature, the coming of daisies, the singing of birds, the bustle of insect life, the pattering of light rain, the knitting and unknitting of buds, and other simple things which homely natures love and welcome: but the *London spring* means admiring eyes, bewildering discourse, enviable conquests, acknowledged triumphs, late slumbers, the toilette and its ministers, note-writing and receiving, a few chords struck on the harp, a duo with Rubini, a drawing retouched *conscientiously*, arrangements for the evening, indispensable calls, a picture-gallery, a jeweller's, a *modiste's*;—and then the park, and the equestrians, and the general buzz, and the particular whisper;—and the divine Kensington! with its beaux and its beauties, and its individual odour of trodden grass, that is so particularly fragrant and fashionable. No other grass has the same odour: try the freshest field ever dappled by daisies, and you will find

its scent as vulgar as the tonquin-bean in comparison. I know of nothing—nobody knows of any thing—like Kensington Gardens on a becoming day, when the air is favourable to beauty; when the soft blue, and the pale green, and the rose-colour, and the straw-colour, and all the delicious spring-tints illustrate the still more delicious figures that loiter in the shade, or shoot by in the sun, or broil on the hot wall, their pretty feet dangling half a yard from the ground, and their charming faces inclined condescendingly (too condescendingly perhaps) backwards towards the privileged who repose their pawing steeds at the other side of the fosse.

Kensington is the true ladies' field of the cloth of gold, it is all patrician; *mauvais ton*, or want of ton, is instantly detected, however it may be huddled up in beauty. The colour of a glove, the texture of a shoe, an obtrusive flower, or an unsanctioned ribbon, betrays it as unequivocally to a practised eye, as the most vulgar exhibition of anxious restlessness or gaping curiosity.

At half-past six the gardens thin, and half an hour later only the quiet folks who dine early, and have old-fashioned fancies about sunsets and hay-

cocks, are visible. When the press of exit comes, I would advise all stragglers to keep aloof from the narrow gates; those who lounge about such perilous premises, may happen to get a stray hit from some chance-directed missile, which neither the waters of Barèges or Bagnères, nor any other known specific for gun-shot wounds, may prove strong enough to cure.

Famous dinners—with *good people*, and *gay people*, and *fine people*, follow, at which the charming creatures appear in all the radiance of a fresh toilette; trifle with iced jelly, or green peas, each with a wrinkle and a drop of dew in it; turn the heads of lords and commons; talk politics with senators, art with artists, folly with boy-peers; and discuss modes, manners, *les idées vagues, et les choses positives* with the young foreign diplomats, who are passported by their high names and privileged profession into their bright society. Then comes the opera-box, where beauties are crowned queens for the time being; and Almack's charmed circle, where presidents have ears as fine as those of the half-immortal Comus; and the duke's fête, and the prince's concert, or the charming Lady ——'s soirée dansante, with waltz,

galop, mazourka, and all their delightful involvements. These, and the thousand other soft contrivances for disarming time which a true capital affords, absorb all the hours not forcibly claimed by inevitable sleep, to which beauties resign their charms, in the same hope with which the famous Duc de Richelieu yielded his wrinkles to the mollifying contact of a veal cutlet.

This is the sparkling side of the gem, the beautiful one; it has its flaws, but the general effect is nothing dimmed by them. But there is an opaque side too, whose shade is never turned upon the fair exclusives of whom we have just been talking.

How little does a young lady of humble fortune and no town connexions, who lives with her mother, or her aunt, or her maiden cousin, in a small melancholy house in some dark and distant street, know of all that blazes and enchants in the far west. To her London is a vast prison, removed from the nature which she loves, and her heart beats against its bars with the useless irritation of a poor caged bird.

Janet Hamilton was one of the many poor girls so situated. Accustomed to a charming home in

the midst of woods and meadows, the dull perspective of R—— Street, the closed blinds of the unfeatured houses that blocked up and darkened the front view, and the melancholy garden, (I believe it called itself,) deep as a draw-well and black as night, behind, filled her mind with sadness, and her eyes sometimes with retrospective tears.

Her father,—the last of an ancient family, had entered life with fair prospects; an uncle, who had good government-interest, had succeeded in procuring for him, almost before his age entitled him to promotion, a rather lucrative place, but it was not a sinecure, and condemned him for a considerable portion of the year to what he called the drudgery of office. He was not actually indolent, but his habits of occupation had been till then adopted voluntarily; and though few people had more good about them than he had, yet there was unfortunately an ingredient mixed up with his fine qualities, which often neutralized their effect; a something in his nature so repugnant to restraint, that as soon as any thing took the shape of an obligation, he became almost incapable of performing it. Add to this organic defect, literary habits,

a passion for the arts, and an intense desire to visit foreign countries, and it may be easily supposed how ill the desk and its mechanical labours suited with the habits of a mind at once free, ideal, negligent, and remarkable for the quality of mental shortsightedness, which prevented him from seeing the most obvious things, if but a few degrees removed from the "mind's eye."

It was vain to tell him that a career so fortunately begun might, if steadily pursued, lead to the highest honours,—he could never see so far; he felt the present restraint, but the calculation of future advantages never could be forced upon him. However, he worked on, because his situation enabled him to be of use to his father, who had nearly ruined himself by unsuccessful speculations, and to augment the enjoyments of a sister some years younger than himself, whom he tenderly loved.

But his duration did not last long: in the short space of six weeks, death deprived him of both his father and his uncle. A legacy of several thousand pounds, left him by the latter, enabled him to quit what he theatrically called his most abhorred condition; this he did as soon as possible, portioned

his sister, married her to a clever and estimable man, and then set forward to realize the fond project of his heart.

He called himself a pilgrim, and though always carefully, and never singularly dressed, except that he wore no cravat, and suffered his hair to curl a little wildly, yet he loved to talk of staff and scallop shell; and when he stood before the shrine of Saint Peter at Rome, absorbed in whispered converse with a very fair creature, he spoke of

“Savage antres,
And vast deserts wild,”

until her bright eyes filled with tears, and her dissuading voice sank into more eloquent silence.

But where he went I know not; whether to Epirus, Antioch, or Damascus; to the Bedouin deserts, or the high Ararat,—he used to speak of all; and would talk of the Gulf of Bussora, the silent valley of Jehosaphat, of the palms that grow about the fountains of Ispahan, and the veiled women who at the hour of sunset go down to gather the sacred blossoms of the lotus on the banks of the Euphrates, as if it had all been familiar to him.

He was long absent, but at length returned to England, and, strange to say—his easy yet ardent nature considered—alone, in cheerless singleness, sobered out of much of the enthusiasm which marked his character in the spring-time of life, grave, thoughtful, averse to society, and especially to the society of women. None pleased him : one was bold, another insipid ; there was always a want of sweetness, or delicacy, or mind, or softness, or an affectation of them, which was still worse. The mere accordance of features never attracted his attention, it was the poetry of expression that charmed his meditative fancy ; and the look that embodied a gracious feeling, a lovely thought, he felt was beauty though it might not be called so. His sister ventured once or twice to question him playfully about the muffled houris of Grand Cairo, and the soft Fatimas of the Turkish harems ; or to hazard a hint touching the magic effect of the Spanish basquina, or the dangerous transparency of the Venetian veil. But it would not do ; he became serious, almost sad, and her true woman's tact soon taught her that she had, somehow or other, touched a string which jarred unpleasantly.

His mind seemed to have lost its purchase; all its natural and acquired riches lay heaped like pieces of machinery, to which the mechanical power had not yet given impulse or direction. His aspect was calm, even to indifference; but there was an under current of distracted thought, of deep-working restless feeling, that sometimes swelled to the top, and eddied for an instant its smooth surface.

In the midst of reveries, increasing melancholy, and mental lassitude, he became acquainted in a very unromantic common-place way, with a young girl who had been bequeathed as a sort of legacy to a lady, a friend of his sister's. She was the sole offspring of a thoughtless and unfortunate marriage: her father, an officer of birth, had been abandoned by his family, and had fallen a victim to climate in some cheap land of pestilence and exile. Her mother had died soon after of a broken heart; and the only friend whose affection had followed this unfortunate pair down to the last page of their mournful story, found herself residuary legatee to the sole wealth they had left behind them,—a gentle girl, who had just completed her fifteenth year when Hamilton first saw

her, hemming long strips of muslin behind the closed blind of her protectress's parlour-window.

She was pretty and innocent, with kind blue eyes, a soft complexion, and an expression of sense and sweetness that gave something of character to her childish countenance. She had no accomplishments, had read little, but was (at least so said her friend,) a sage little manager, and an excellent nurse. There was something graceful in her naïveté, tender in her shyness, and very sweet in her smile; but she was not striking, and her general appearance was that of a timid school-girl.

Such as she was, Hamilton had no sooner become a visitor at the house of her protectress, than he neglected all other society. Whether it was that he found repose in her calm simplicity from the danger of renewed excitement, or that her turn of mind pleased him, or that dreading to be again the victim of those desolating emotions which had embittered the fairest portion of his existence, he wished to place her gentle image as a shield between himself and his passions, I know not; but in three months after their first acquaintance he married her, to the astonishment of all who knew any thing of his story.

“Such a man as Mr. Hamilton!” exclaimed one, “who has been every where, who has seen all the beauties of all the courts in Europe. What attractions could he have discovered in little Miss Wilmot?”

“Little Miss Wilmot!” echoed another; “what—the child in the striped frock? You surprise me,—how strange! such a prodigiously handsome man as Mr. Hamilton to throw himself away so unaccountably; he who, when at Madrid, might have carried off from a host of competitors that exquisite creature the bellissima Trastamara, who poisoned her husband in a sorbet a month after the nuptials.”

“There, indeed, he had a loss,” said a third dryly. “But without taking up with one of your love-and-murder doñas, he might have done somewhat better than this at home; for I know where he could have had forty thousand pounds and an uncommonly nice girl too,—fine growth, famous stepper, and an eye!—But it is always so with your desperate gallants; nothing too simple or too ignorant for them when they turn towards matrimony.”

Thus talked the gossips; but Hamilton was not

a man to be talked in or out of any thing ; he had been too long away from home, and had left it too early in life to have any very intimate friends ; and to the opinions of mere acquaintances, he had never been in the habit of attaching any value. The *on dit* of a limited circle,—that sometimes salutary bugbear of a feeble or perverse mind, and often bane of high intention,—never appeared to him worth attending to. He quitted London, and settled with his gentle bride in a kind of farmhouse cottage on the edge of a rough common, full of wild hollows, overhung with the flaring blossoms of the yellow furze and the dull purple berry of the juniper. This common was not a downright goose-green, though geese sometimes fed upon it ; but rather a wild brake, helped out in its colouring by heaths and mosses, and by the rich brown hue of the earth that showed itself in many wild and winding tracks, and ragged bits that worked out amidst the fresh vegetation. A gipsy-forest skirted the common at one side, and many a fire had blazed there under the greenwood tree, and lean donkey mumbled the bark of its old oaks, or rolled on the short turf beneath them. Nor were rural accessories ever wanting ; the wood-cutter's

cart, or the smoke of the charcoal-burner's fire, or the bustle of children gathering sticks, or shaking down acorns, or driving their cows to a shaded pool that glistened on the edge of the wood, were always giving fresh touches of life to the simple picture.

On the other side, the quiet village with its modest spire and green church-yard, shaded by the full open foliage of three fine elms, spread itself out cheerfully, with that air of chimney-corner comfort which belongs essentially to an English village of the downright rustic kind. Not a parlour-windowed village, where the maiden gentlewomen still knot fringe, and drink weak tea, and play penny whist, and mark their game with four bright *coins*, or four smooth kidney-beans; where the scarlet geranium trails its fine-drawn stalks against the cold bay-window, screening the colder figure that sits behind it, and every thing looks raw, even when the sun shines: nor yet the modern row of almshouse-looking cottages standing up at either side of the high road, each with its briery stripe of neglected garden, which a stout man could trample into mud in five minutes; but a village of farm-houses, and farm-yards, and snug

cottages, scattered about in green lanes and corn-fields, with daisied meadows, and orchards, and blooming gardens about them, and a vine, a woodbine, or a pear-tree covering their south wall. Such was the village that turned its pleasant features towards Hamilton's dwelling ; and beyond it a cheerful country of corn-fields and hedge-rows, with a soft broken distance, closed the scene.

I honour the inventors and utilizers of the steam-engine, and respect its almost miraculous powers ; but I hope they never may be exercised to accelerate the movement of the plough, or to supersede the picturesque labours of the sober horse, or plodding oxen, whose sweet breath I have sometimes fancied I scented, mixing with the healthy odour of the freshly broken-up earth, at a distance far beyond the reach of its suave perfume. When steam-directed ploughs are seen working through the stubbles, deadening the fresh aspect of nature by curling volumes of black town-like smoke, we may take a sponge and blot out that pleasant country scene, to which the plough-share gives just the right life-tint, from our cheerful catalogue of rustic images.

It happened, that Hamilton and his " late

espoused" took possession of their new dwelling in the season of the corn-harvest, when the sound of the flail issued from every barn, and the good old plough was leisurely tracing deep furrows in the red earth. The sound and sight of long-forgotten things seemed to awaken a new mind within him,—the mind of memory: he had almost forgotten home and the scenes of early life, but now they came upon him with the freshness of a morning dream.

There is nothing so identical as the memory of youth; nothing that has so much truth, or such constant sunshine in it. If we had troubles then, succeeding ones have made them seem almost like joys; when we look back, how the sports of childhood, the idle projects, the hearty mirth,—broad and contagious, born neither of wit or humour, but of sheer light-heartedness, come before us, and all dancingly, as if there had never been vexation or disappointment mixed up with them. Every trim grass-plot recalled to Hamilton's mind the play-ground of his school-house, and every wild copse and scrubby apple-tree his holiday larcenies. Even out of the perfume of flowers grew pages of his boyhood's history; he never could pass by some

lavender-bushes, that half choked up the wicket of his garden, without thinking of his mother, who had often taken him with her to hold her basket, while she carefully clipped off the grey blossoms from a similar tuft in her favourite flower-knot. And for the sake of her dear memory he would never let them be touched ; but preferred blocking up the wicket, and breaking out another in a less convenient place.

His sweet companion entered into all his feelings, and shared them fully. Her childhood seemed to her like a sorrowful dream, from which she had been awakened into life and consciousness by the voice of love. She had never lived in the country, but its image was in her heart ; and as its lineaments were gradually developed, she felt as if she looked upon well-known objects like those who, in perusing the works of a great writer, find thoughts struck out which suddenly appear to have been long familiar to their minds, but which had not until that moment found a channel of utterance.

Their cottage became a paradise, and the “ lone Cyclades,” the palmy Egypt, Medina, Mecca, and the high Olympus, were all forgotten ; and he who had wandered in foreign lands until the remem-

brance of his own had seemed obliterated, suddenly felt the love of home spring up in his heart with all the vigour of a new-born passion. Every scene was fair, every homely sound touching, every old-fashioned country-custom sage, respectable, pleasant, or affectionate; even the climate came in for indulgence, and he would praise our lingering twilight at the expense of the protracted brightness and sudden extinction of an eastern day. The common air had incense in it, the common nature poetry; and often in the grey of the morning he would open his casement to hear the cock crow, for he delighted in its shrill trumpet, with its bright self-sufficient tone and insolence of enjoyment. It was a better pastoral, he used to say, than Pope or Shenstone, or even Virgil or Theocritus, had ever written.

I scarcely know why I dwell so long on those days of quiet happiness, for they have little to do with my story. I suppose, because the subject pleases me, though it will probably interest few others. Had I time, I should like to make all those who would listen, in love with the little girl in the striped frock, and to describe how beautifully both her mind and person were developed by the

new sentiment of happiness, and the consciousness of being an object of interest and of love; how all the delightful qualities, which the exercised eye of Hamilton had discovered in their germ, had expanded into perfectness, and what a sweet and lovely flower had blown out from the bud of (as some thought) little promise:—but I must go on.

I love biography, and yet the conclusion always affects me painfully. When I have run along gaily, happily, anxiously, with a fine and endowed spirit through the mazes—thorny or flowery—of life, I cannot follow it unmoved in its pale decline to the gradual, solemn close. Perhaps in the midst of happiness, in the moment of triumph, in the fulness of mental power,—or worse, before that power, or the beautiful feelings that go in alliance with it, have been rightly appreciated or the injustice of the world redressed, comes the last scene; and the warm heart, the fervid mind with all its yet undrawn-upon resources, all that it had to tell, are gone for ever!

They went together,—this fond and faithful pair,—of the same malady; he caught it first, and she in her close attendance at his bedside. The happiest of unions was thus dissolved, and the heart which was strong in love, lay mouldering

beside that kindred one, on whose withered hopes it had poured the fresh dew of tenderness, causing them to spring forth anew, though scathed by sorrow down to the very root.

—II.—

Poor Hamilton was scarcely laid in the grave, when a banker, in whose hands he had placed a considerable part of his fortune for the purpose of investment, failed; and instead of the affluence which he had left behind him, a very humble modicum became the portion of his only child.

Janet was scarcely seventeen when her aunt, the sole relative whom she knew of on earth, drew her from the home which “was left unto her desolate.” The beloved sister of her father was now a widow, and in moderate, though not mean circumstances; she had no children, and received her brother’s orphan with tenderness and joy.

Mrs. Brudenel’s strong resemblance to her brother was a key to Janet’s heart; it opened at once to receive her maternal embrace. Like the Arabian earth, she was not the rose, but she had dwelt

with it; and when on seeing Janet she exclaimed, “ My dearest child ! ” it seemed as if the voice of one in heaven had spoken comfort to her.

And this impression never was effaced; it was the sound of her father’s voice, and it came upon her ear like the memory of happy days. Mrs. Brudenel was a kind and estimable woman; few had more agreeable qualities, none a more cheerful temper or a warmer heart. In youth she had been deemed strikingly handsome, and in middle age still retained the charm of a pleasant and varying, rather than marked expression, a well-bred air, and a certain naïveté that gave a character of originality, of a very happy and engaging kind, both to her person and manners. She had married (not so much from what is called liking, as because her brother’s wandering propensities threatened to leave her, sooner or later, alone in the world) an excellent man, whom she sincerely respected, and who merited, and at length gained her entire affection. He knew the innocence of her mind and the strength of her principles, and indulged her cheerful and enjoying disposition to an extent, that might have been dangerous to a less pure and candid nature. She was happy and grateful, and he content to see her

so. In his last long illness, she watched him with an unflinching and judiciously exercised tenderness, that made the closing hours of his life seem almost the happiest; he left her all that he possessed—a respectable competency, and was sincerely regretted by one who, though not of a passionate, or perhaps acutely sensitive nature, cherished his memory with real affection, and always spoke of his kindness and virtues with gratitude and feeling.

Two thirds of Mrs. Brudenel's life had been passed in London, and she sincerely believed that even a lodging in Piccadilly, or Pall Mall, was preferable to the finest isolated park in England. Not that she was a person of an inelegant organization; on the contrary, she possessed a considerable share of delicacy both of mind and manners; but her habits were town habits,—not those of absolute high life, which are the same in London, Paris, Petersburg, and Vienna, but those identified with London itself. Her sphere of existence was one which allowed much liberty of action; for though, as the wife of a distinguished barrister, she had moved in a circle of great respectability, yet she had not lived within the actual pale of high society, and had from taste

adopted habits of ease, rather than those of etiquette. She had no passion for the country, and had the courage to say so; loved flowers, but was content to cherish them in her balcony, or admire them at Colville's; was fond of the shade and verdure of a fine tree, but did not despise the "mincing Dryades" of the adjoining square; thought Roehampton savage, and Twickenham rather lonely, and found Hyde Park a sufficient paradise. Plays were her dear delight; but she was not scrupulous about going to a public box, or making one of a quiet party to the pit of the Opera-house. Though accustomed to an equipage, she resigned herself philosophically to a hackney-coach; rather liked walking in the streets when the weather was fine, and was, moreover, addicted to looking in at shop-windows.

For this last practice I entreat indulgence; indeed, I am so sensible of its plebeian character, that I should not have dared to name it, had I not known it to be also one of the fancies of a person, whose fine taste and intellectual superiority may be allowed to sanction a propensity somewhat, perhaps, undignified.

Mrs. Brudenel resided in a small house in

R—— Street, and the front drawing-room, in which she habitually sat, revelled in one of those enlivening views of which I have already spoken. An elderly lady lived in the opposite house, and behind her perforated brick wall no sign of life was ever visible. Long canvas blinds preserved the pale blue lining of the drawing-room suit of chintz-pattern calicot from the attacks of the unfrequent Phœbus, (whose visits, even in his especial visiting season, were little more than watery gleams dancing faintly on the upper story,) and green ones, on the screw principle, obscured the parlour-windows to a certain height, where they were met by two breadths of scarlet moreen gently dissevered and drawn aside in everlasting plaits, never to be deranged out of the professional jerk conferred on them by the finger and thumb of the upholsterer.

Four reluctant bulbous roots in blue glasses were once placed by a half-revealed hand on the outside of one of these same parlour-windows, but soon withdrawn, probably to the warmer atmosphere of the chimney-piece; and when the day was very sultry, a sash was sometimes gently raised to the height of the blind, or perhaps an

inch above it. The lady (like many other solitary ladies in London) had few, or rather no visitors; and the ring of the milkman, or the ignoble cry of "beer," with the apparition of the maid-servant letting herself in with a huge key, or the pinched, puritanical foot-boy (indentured by his mother at low wages till his growth came) hailing the rapid muffin-man, or stealing round the corner to confab with a crony, were the only external signs of life or habitation which her melancholy premises ever exhibited.

It was long before poor Janet's profound affliction allowed her to notice indifferent objects; but as spring advanced, and the air sometimes tempted her for a moment to the half-shaded window, she could not help feeling what a dismal change she had made from her wild wood-walks and sunny corn-fields, from watching in the same sweet season the buds as they swelled and deepened, and opening the ivied casement to respire the first breath of morning, or the sweet evening air after a light prolific shower, to the gloom of R— Street, the starved crocus and meagre hyacinth of her aunt's balcony, and the sullen trickle of rain converted into mire as it streamed off the

black roofs, dislodging the poor sooty sparrows who had established themselves in and about the chimneys. But with these thoughts came others, whose hold was deeper on her heart; and fields and flowers, and all the soft apparel of nature, were soon forgotten in the recollection of those with whom she had enjoyed their delights, and who slept together under the old elms in the green church-yard.

Most women who have once possessed beauty, and are not soured by its loss, love to see the undocked entail pass into the right line; it is like a boil in Medea's kettle, or a kind of transfusing process, by which the first *self* is merged into a second, and often with so perfect and undiluted a flow of interest and feeling, that each is more acutely active, more sensitively alive, than it had ever been in its first and more individual tenement. Janet's beauty gratified her aunt's personal vanity, and she watched its effect on others with a sort of anxiety which her light and careless spirit had never allowed her to feel on her own account. But if she was proud of her niece's loveliness, it must in justice be said, that she was still more touched and delighted by her unaffected simplicity, and the

charm, feeling, and intelligence of her conversation; it was like talking with a new heart, and a beautiful one, through the medium of words, not picked out as fitting ones, but put together, almost created, by its own emotions. Her social nature had often felt, and severely, the painfulness of a solitary life, deprived of all particular interest or excitement, and she rejoiced to find this gentle heart warming to her own, and replying to its affectionate language.

But it was not enough to possess this bird of paradise, it was essential to her happiness that it should be seen by others; she felt the absolute necessity of participation, and like the possessor of an undoubted Raphael, who burns to mark the open proofs of its authenticity in the jealousy of others, was not content with the solitary sentiment of admiration confined to her own breast, but would fain, under one pretext or another, call in all the world to see her treasure, and envy her its monopoly. Her idea was, that to possess beauty was useless if there was no one to admire it, and she would quote Pope, Gray, and Waller, very aptly, to support the case in point.

“It is so seldom,” she said, “one sees such a

girl as Janet, that it seems quite a sin to shut her up as if she had a mouse on her cheek, or another head looking over her shoulder in Siamese sisterhood; but she is so naturally beautiful, and so beautifully natural—”

“Quite a wild rose,” interrupted a lady on the verge, who affected sentiment.

“What a queen she would make!” exclaimed another, whose ideas were more mundane.

“Such an expression of candour and sweetness!” observed an elderly gentleman, much looked up to in Mrs. Brudenel’s circle.

“And such a smile!” subjoined a young one, who committed rhymes; “breaking with a bright scattered light through the melancholy that overshadows her countenance, like a moonbeam on the face of the waters.”

Every one thought the simile charming; and one of the party, who was just going to say that it was pretty to see Janet looking when she smiled like a truant child laughing through its wet eyelashes, drew in her words, half ashamed of such a common-place idea, and swallowed them with a hem.

But how to produce this phenomenon was the question. Mrs. Brudenel’s circle had become

extremely limited since the death of her husband and the consequent diminution of her income, and the sober card-party, or work-bag convention, to which she was now restricted, could not be either interesting or advantageous to Janet. Middling balls were worse; for there one made acquaintance with indifferent—that is to say, unfashionable men. Theatres (she now discovered) were a vulgar medium of display; and the park an unattainable one, for so attractive a person as her niece, without an equipage. In short, after a vast deal of reflection, from which nothing was elicited, she began to see that the means of achieving what she desired were not within her power; and being one of those happy people who always turn out the bright side of the canvas, soon forgot in Janet's society the absolute necessity she had believed herself under of showing her off; while Janet, who had never heard of the exhibiting system, felt happy at finding herself once more the object of affection, and in possession of leisure which she had been taught to value, and employ delightfully.

—III.—

Meanwhile, spring advanced; and one day, when the sun looked out invitingly, Mrs. Brudenel, forgetting her former objections, proposed a stroll in the park, to which Janet, who had never been there, readily assented. The day was bright, the park fresh as a May garland, the Serpentine like a fair mirror, just rippled by the track of the stately swans, who followed the alluring crumbs held out to them from the shore, as I have seen their effigy in turnip (unconscious bearer of a needle) sail after the load-stone that was gently trailed along before it.

The leaves were not yet quite enough expanded, or the air sufficiently warm for Kensington Gardens; so the walk along the edge of the Serpentine was on that day the field of action. Mrs. Brudenel and Janet sat down on a bench near to the brilliant promenade; and the latter, to whom the scene had not only its own charms, but also those of novelty, remarked upon whatever attracted her attention with a naïve felicity of expression, that greatly amused and delighted her friend. At every moment fresh groupes passed; fair creatures and

their pretenders, and as fair creatures who had no pretenders; some bowing smilingly to the nonchalant nod of passing dandies, others gliding by in the dignity of assumed or real indifference; some content with the effect of their charms, and others sighing over the hopes awakened by pointed attentions at the Opera the night before, and frustrated by a blank look over at the next meeting.

Janet was at first exceedingly amused. The scene was bright, the ladies beautiful; every one seemed gay, and surrounded by friends; and poor Janet had no sooner observed this happy clanship, than it struck sorrowfully upon her mind that she was herself a stranger,—not only in the park, but every where! and, but for her kind aunt, alone in the universe. When gaiety is not contagious, it is oppressive; she felt it so, and was pleased when Mrs. Brudenel proposed their returning home.

Howard Dudley was not a park man; but he happened to be there on that day, and to have seen Janet as she sat forgetting herself and admiring others, not quite (he thought) so worthy of admiration. Dudley was a supremely fashionable person, and, independent of his fashion, a distinguished one; spoke eloquently in the House,

and delightfully out of it; had written a volume of prose, which the leading Reviews had praised, and another of rhymes, which friendly critics declared to be poetry. Besides all this, he was particularly handsome, without being at all what is called a male beauty; was known to have done some generous things, and some valorous ones—and both unvauntingly; and had the purest taste in dress, the most perfect ton, and the most provoking insensibility of any man about town. The last quality was in itself almost enough to account for the influence which his opinion exercised over every thing legitimately fine and fashionable. All that was most noble, lovely, and (to others) disdainful, desired and sought for the fiat of Dudley's approbation;—scarcely any one obtained it. A monosyllable of languid acquiescence when another praised, a nod that was not absolutely disapproving, was caught at and registered as compliment, a thing to grow conceited on, when nothing more decisive could be obtained.

Lady Lucy Bellenden had just returned from Spain, where she had accompanied her husband on a diplomatic mission, and made her *rentrée* at a *bal costumé* at —— House in an Andalusian dance of

rather a marked character. It was an experiment, and opinions were decidedly against it: grave ones drew up, gay ones looked doubtingly; and even those who had flattered and praised her ladyship into the folly, contrived to make their rapturous admiration more offensive than gratifying. In short, she was in a minority, which on such an occasion is a defeat, and though very pretty and not very timid, was beginning to feel pitiably uncomfortable: when Dudley, taking up a book that lay on a table near to him, traced the following lines with a pencil on a blank leaf, and left them to be devoured by the curious:—

To the bright Peri,
Whom men call "the Lady Lucy."

Beautiful, natural, noble, and young,
No fairer by better bards ever was sung;
If Seville such feather'd feet boasts as thine are,
I dub it of cities the eminent star.

Not its own Guadalquiver more gracefully flows,
Nor its own summer moonshine a purer ray throws
Than thy step, as it swimmingly glides o'er the floor,
Than thine eyes, as they turn from the eyes that adore.

Dance on, lovely lady, and may thy dance be
A type of thy life,—gracious, radiant,—but free
From the vexings, and crossings, and murmurs of those
Who, being the nightshade, would fain be the rose.

The verses were indifferent, but the effect was decisive. In a moment the tables were turned, and Lady Lucy took immediate rank as "Cynthia of the minute." Her triumph was, however, not altogether unalloyed. Admiration had not motivated Dudley's impromptu; it was a mere act of good nature, and the adorer, on whom she had too prematurely counted, relapsed into a mere bowing acquaintance.

Dudley was blazé'd on the chapter of beauty. He had seen so many handsome faces appear, attract, fatigue, and vanish, that he began to look upon them with a sort of critical indifference; analyzing every new one as if it were a mineral water, and foretelling the duration of its influence with cold but unerring sagacity. If Janet had been merely beautiful, she might have passed with a simple note of approbation; but she was more than that. The habitual expression of her countenance was soft and thoughtful, but not always thoughtful; a look, a word, would sometimes change its sweet seriousness into an arch smile, or a flash of bright and earnest joy, all the more charming for being unexpected.

No one ever blushed as she did. Her living

roses were like the language of flowers; all-beautiful words might be read in their shifting tints,—truth, hope, joy, affection, tenderness, belief, modesty; sometimes disdain, but never anger. Her eyes were full of light and innocence,—eyes of another world, Dudley thought, but could not tell whether they were brown or blue, though he had looked long on them. About the eyelashes there could be no doubt; the long black eyelashes gently turned up at the points,—a childish beauty which they had retained from infancy, and which became the innocent character of her countenance. Nothing could have made a *mode* of Janet, neither could any thing have deprived her of a certain noble and gracious air that individualized her appearance. It was said by a person who had studied the character of her beauty, that she looked like one who had never been taught any thing, but whose ideas had come to her by the intercourse of angels.

All this, and more, had been observed by Dudley, as he passed and repassed, or reclined upon a bench at a modest distance from the one which Janet and her aunt occupied. The former had not observed him; but Mrs. Brudenel, whose

eyes, though not so bright, were far more observant, had remarked his earnest and persevering gaze. A stare is in general an offensive expression of admiration, but the skilful Dudley had contrived to make it flattering, and even respectful. It was not an ordinary stare, vulgarly compounded of insolence and curiosity; but a look that shunned encounter, and sought to delight itself without distressing the object of its attention.

As they walked homewards, Mrs. Brudenel observed that Dudley followed at a distance. I do not know how she contrived to find this out, for she was certainly far too discreet, and too sensible of the dignity of her functions as chaperon to a beauty, to have turned her head round; but the fact is that she did see him. This secret of double sight is only possessed by women, who can see many things without looking at them. But it was natural that so handsome a person as Janet should attract observation; and Mrs. Brudenel, who was not aware how exquisitely analytic was the taste of the person attracted, paid little attention to the circumstance.

But the next day, and again the next, the same distinguished figure was seen on horseback slowly

passing down R—— Street ; and on the following Sunday, Mrs. Brudenel and Janet had scarcely taken their seats in the sober corner of a narrow pew in the neighbouring chapel, when Dudley appeared advancing up the aisle preceded by the officious pew-opener, who with a receipt-in-full countenance let him into the one exactly opposite.

Every eye in the vicinity was immediately turned upon the stranger,—strangers so rarely visited R—— chapel ; indeed, why should they ? There was no singing, no popular preacher, no painted glass,—nothing but the children whistling through their teeth, and old Mr. Aylwood sermonizing through his nose. Then a person so evidently of high fashion, so different from the young men of the quarter who came there in Sunday suits, shining like calimanco,—what could it mean ?

Two or three young ladies, who had keys to the square and paraded there daily, had ineffable imaginings ; and the daughter of an oil-and-pickle vender, whose beauty had made a noise in the parish and turned the head of a sentimental shopman, who from worshipping her as she flounced like a nymph of quality through her father's shop,

disdaining the contact of muscatels and malagas, had passed into rhymes, and from thence into moonstruck melancholy, was observed to draw off her glove, and exhibit her ringed fingers in the direction of the stranger's pew with notable assiduity. The noise made by the pew-opener caused Janet to look up; and as she did so, her eyes met those of Dudley for the first time. They were instantly withdrawn,—I believe with a blush; but that she herself denied, when Mrs. Brudenel playfully charged her with it.

A month after this, Dudley was a visitor at Mrs. Brudenel's; and in another month, *l'ami de la maison*. "A delightful creature," she used to say, "so very natural, so charmingly unaffected;" and would add, "It is quite wonderful how a person so influential, so looked up to in the world of fashion, can have preserved such freshness of heart and feeling," and her remarks were just. To the world he appeared *fine*, thoughtless, indifferent; but in the society of his new friends, the rich material of his mind seemed to unfold as flowers do when they feel the influence of a congenial atmosphere. In the midst of his careless gossip, his most undressed chat, the stores of his

various and extensive knowledge seemed to run over unknowingly, freshening and enriching the dryest and least prolific subject. Often touches of thought and feeling came, like those mysterious shadows that sometimes spread rapidly over the face of the waters when no cloud appears in the heavens to account for the passing darkness. Nor was this unexpected shading the least engaging charm of his conversation; perhaps it was the one which in familiar intercourse delighted the most. His careless brilliancy was scattered as a common partage; but his deeper feelings were folded up in his heart, to be brought forth only by the call of kindred spirits, who felt the distinction as one which made them sharers in his more intimate feelings.

Mrs. Brudenel remained the summer in town. She had no country-house, and both aunt and niece preferred the evening quiet of Kensington Gardens and the parks, a row on the river, a day at Richmond, or a ramble amongst the gipsies at Norwood, where the Dryades have still a summer encampment, to the crowd, and heat, and vulgar bustle of a sea-side establishment within five hours' drive or sail of London, in the dog-days. Farther

distances were unattainable; so Janet filled her balcony with roses, twined jessamine round the trellis of the small verandah, cultivated carnations, and sent the odour of mignonette and garden violets all over the house. Dudley was entirely of their opinion as to the good sense and good taste of remaining in town; and though embowered villas and lordly castles were at his command or option, suddenly discovered that the resources of London were inexhaustible, and the air, from the constant watering of the streets, infinitely cooler as well as more invigorating, than that of the country. Mrs. Brudenel's eyes smiled when she heard this, though she tried to look believably. She had long been aware of the interest which motivated Dudley's stay, and was pleased to see admiration deepening into a more puissant sentiment, for he was all that she could wish (and her wishes were not moderate) for Janet; she had watched the progress of what she could no longer doubt was a real attachment. Dudley's manner to Janet, so delicately respectful, so evidently yet silently tender, seemed to her more indicative of truth than a thousand protestations. She had read the deep but gentle feeling that replied to its

silent language in Janet's increased seriousness, and waited the avowal which seemed to tremble on Dudley's lips with as much tranquillity as could be expected from so lively a nature.

—IV.—

“How dull we are without Mr. Dudley,” said Mrs. Brudenel one morning as she sat sewing tassels on a purse, while Janet arranged some fresh flowers in a vase beside her. Janet said nothing. “It is three days since we have seen him,” continued her aunt; “I hope he has not forgotten us.”

“Forgotten us? O no!” said Janet.

“Why, my love, do you think it impossible?”

“Perhaps not impossible, but very unlikely; he seemed so fond of your society, so happy in it, as if he wished for nothing more.”

“Yes,” replied Mrs. Brudenel, smiling archly, “he certainly admires me prodigiously, that is sufficiently obvious; and I think, considering how very fine he is, and how very simple you are, tolerates your rusticities with great good-nature.”

Janet blushed her brightest red, smiled, broke the head of her finest rose, threw some wet stalks on a favourite sketch, and went on blushing and blundering till a knock at the door took off Mrs. Brudenel's attention.

“It is Dudley's knock,” she said. “Now we shall hear what excuse my infidel will imagine.” Then, with one of her droll airs, “Do I look in beauty to-day, love? Is my cap advantageous? Shall I seem indifferent, or offended? Neither, I think; I shall be tender. ‘Tenderness, (as Lady Wishfort says,) becomes me best,—a sort of dyingness; my niece affects it, but she wants features.’ But you, dearest, must rub your cheeks to your roses; you look as mealy as the ghost in Hamlet. Go, love, and bring me a handkerchief, an embroidered one, mind, in case of tears.”

At this moment Dudley's step was heard ascending the stairs, and Janet, thankful for her aunt's considerate commission, escaped by one door a moment before he entered at the other.

Thus did gaiety prelude an interview which consigned more than one heart to sorrow. Dudley had come to bid adieu! A hasty mission to Dresden,—a command that admitted neither of refusal

or delay,—only two days allowed for preparation, and that night he was to quit London, to be absent perhaps many months; at all events the period was indefinite. There was no distant hope of return dwelt upon, no allusion to the future, no avowal of attachment, no claim to be remembered; but his movements were agitated, his look desponding, and the marks of a strong internal struggle were expressed in the abrupt and tremulous sound of his voice. He seemed like an actor who had undertaken an inferior part, and hesitated whether to play it on to the end, or throw it off boldly.

At length it was all over; and Dudley had crossed the street for the last time, and was out of sight. Janet still leaned against the window, looking towards the spot where he had vanished, and Mrs. Brudenel had returned to her purse tassels, from which it may be supposed her thoughts were far away.

Perhaps she was the most unhappy of the two, for she knew the world, had studied human nature, and marked the uneven current of man's love. She saw in the sudden absence, unsoftened by avowal or pledge, the struggles of a mind working to disengage itself from the chains which were

fastening round it, and felt that he who had strength enough to break them asunder, and voluntarily throw off the bondage which true lovers prize, would never again risk the danger of seeing her whose presence he had found so perilous. He was gone, then—and gone for ever ! and her warm heart filled with indignation when she recollected his long-continued and most unjustifiable attentions, and how he had trifled with, perhaps destroyed, Janet's happiness from a light feeling of casual preference,—or worse, a culpable and unfeeling vanity.

It is true that Dudley had never mentioned the word love ; but was his passion less evident because unavowed ? O no ! and that reserve, which Janet attributed to delicacy, seemed to her aunt only a kind of scape-goat by which the point of honour might get out of the scrape with unwrung withers.

Other thoughts came later, and when the first warm feelings of anger and indignation had somewhat subsided, she reviewed the matter more calmly ; and feeling that Janet was not calculated to inspire a transient preference, or Dudley to feel one for such an object ; that he was (great as had been his fault) as much superior to the base calcu-

lations of a profligate vanity, as she was raised by the purity and dignity of her nature above the risk of becoming its victim, concluded that—not want of fortune, for Dudley’s mind was obviously exempt from sordid feeling,—but want of fashion had been the cause of his defection; and while thoroughly despising, she began to pity a man who could submit a mind, gifted as his was, to be padlocked into narrowness, cramped in its free and honourable expansion by that inexorable limit, the apparently slight, but in reality stronger than strong barrier of fashion, which like a rope of grass, though woven of the most fragile materials, receives from the mode of its formation a degree of solidity by which it is enabled to retain the voluminous mass within its assigned boundary.

In short, Mrs. Brudenel discovered that *exclusives*, who lead in the perfumed atmosphere of fashion, who are necessarily “pleins d’idées accessoires,” do not carry their serious intentions into R—— Street; that however a man of Dudley’s calibre may admire a Miss Hamilton, whom nobody knows, who goes about on foot, and lives under the protection of a lawyer’s widow, yet to think seriously of her would be too ridiculous.

What would the world say?—the world! the committee of Almack's! Better meet the bayonets of Prince Frederick's Mohawks, or the tender mercies of the melancholy Miguel.

But Janet knew not this; she, poor girl, still believed in masks, which her more experienced friend discovered were only very smooth vellum skilfully painted. The idea of Dudley's eternal absence never once crossed her mind. The sadness of her heart seemed to certify to his; the hope of his return to be as proof that he desired it also; for it seemed to her that minds, so much in accordance as theirs were, must think, and feel, and hope together. She knew that Dudley loved her, though he had never told her so; she had no doubt of his fidelity, for she never thought of separating his image from that of truth, of honour, of high feeling. Had any one said to her, "Dudley has forgotten you," she would have smiled as incredulously as if she had been told that the Emperor of China had sent her a present of caravan tea and costly birds' nests. She knew nothing of deceit, and as little of the exactions of fashion; and though the least confident of human beings, scarcely knowing and never remembering that she possessed any attrac-

tions, yet she still felt that Dudley had preferred her to all others; and in her utter ignorance of the world, of the disadvantage of living in R—Street, of knowing nobody, I really believe that (strange as such ignorance may seem) the idea of the immense gulf which fashion had placed between them never once occurred to her.

But time ripens minds, and fears, and sorrows; certainty gives way to doubt, and doubt again becomes certainty,—but of another kind. A year had gone by, and Janet was a changed creature; the past was written in her heart, and seemed to have left no place for the future,—the once beautiful future! that shone out and faded like love's promises.

—V.—

“I wonder, my dear Mrs. Brudenel,” said a meddling friend, “that you keep Miss Hamilton in town. The air of London evidently disagrees with her; she has quite lost her roses.”

“I am sorry to say,” said another, who piqued herself on speaking her mind, “that she alters

sadly. No *éclat* now ; but your country beauties don't do here. Our town belles are inured to a town life ; while your rustic divinities whiten into spermaceti in a season. I really quite feel for her."

"Pray do not distress yourself, my dear madam," returned Mrs. Brudenel impatiently ; "at nineteen roses come back of themselves. Later in life, perhaps, fears and precautions become reasonable ; but—" Here her good-nature interfered, and finding herself vexed and growing personal, she stopped short, and abruptly changed the conversation.

But it dwelt heavily on her mind, and self-reproof came with it. She had seen, and with sorrow, the alteration in Janet's appearance ; yet that the air of London, the purest air (as she firmly believed) in the world,—a restorative in itself, could have any thing to do with it, had never occurred to her. She had indeed attributed her niece's pensive aspect to another, and a truer cause ; but new air might be necessary for her, and better air—if such a thing could be found, and then change of scene. "How inconceivable, (thought she,) that it should have escaped me ! Ah, my brother, you entrusted your child to a

careless guardian! And yet it cannot be my heart that errs, for it is all Janet's. Still these envious women could see what escaped the eyes of affection, usually so vigilant. Well, the error is, alas! committed; let us think of the remedy.

It was as quickly applied as thought of. Janet felt, when the proposal of quitting London was made to her, a glow of happiness run through her frame; but an instant's reflection brought before her all the difficulties with which a narrow income, long-cherished habits, intimate connexions, and the invisible chains which get folded about one who has remained stationary for many years, encumbered Mrs. Brudenel's affectionate projects.

"I cannot suffer it, my dearest aunt," said Janet. "Is it for me to withdraw you from the home which you love, from the friends of your life, to wander about among strangers, with whom neither your habits or your heart may find affinity?—let us not talk of it. With you I am happy every where, and shall be well, too; you will see me recover the bloom which you regret: trust to my courage. When I think of the generous sacrifices you would make for me, I blush for my unworthy egotism: from this moment,

dearest friend, I shall be less unworthy of your love. Heaven will, I trust, support me, and teach me no longer to grieve a heart so fond and disinterested, by the selfish indulgence of—of—”

“Hush, my love,” interrupted Mrs. Brudenel, “we will talk no more of that; and as to sacrifices, so far from making one, I only put into execution a plan which I have had in view all my life. I am as sick of London as you are; and besides, can no longer endure that all the lean maidens in the neighbourhood, who used to borrow—sometimes steal—my *modes*, and regularly waited till my spring bonnet or Kensington hat appeared before they ventured to order their own feeble imitations, should taunt me with Long-champs and the Tuileries, and cry, ‘Dear Mrs. Brudenel, you must curtail your petticoat, and increase your sleeve, and discard your cap with the purple flowers; no lighting up purple at night. Really you ought to go to Paris; every one contrives it. You would look ten years younger in one of Herbault’s delicious marmottes, with an under-wreath of the *fleurs de saison*.’ In short, my dear child, I have decided on cultivating my personal charms, which, according to Miss Augusta

Young and Miss Maria Jones, are still susceptible of improvement."

"Ah, my dear aunt!" said Janet, with an incredulous shake of the head.

"No expostulations, love. It is absolutely necessary to my happiness that I should be seen in a wreath *forme diadème*, entirely *en fleurs fines*, as Miss Augusta says emphatically; and so no obstacles, if you please, no jealousy,—at least no demonstrations,—and to-morrow for the note of preparation."

A fortnight after this conversation, a large white paper, with "To be Let," in flourishing characters in the middle of it, obscured each centre pane of Mrs. Brudenel's dining-room windows; and she was sitting on the deck of a packet-boat, happy in the feeling of self-approval, happy in the hope of future happiness; and by her side Janet, with the strong sentiment of grateful affection in her heart, and its bright expression in her charming countenance.

A little later, and Janet's good sense and good feeling, her earnest desire to answer to her aunt's wishes, and render the sacrifices she had made for her availing, had begun to produce their natural results: her mind was fast recovering its tone, her

cheeks their roses, and her heart a portion of its calmness.

Young maidens' hearts are often like the waters of the Dead Sea; there is an elasticity in their stillness which can buoy up the pearl, that in the turbulent ocean would sink at once to the bottom, or be thrown ashore among those idle weeds which it casts up from its bosom. Janet's had perhaps hopes, sustained she knew not how, and recollections of gentle promise, that still floated on the calm but strong support of woman's faith.

I say *perhaps*, for there were no longer any outward evidences of inward feeling. "Indeed," as Mrs. Jones, the mother of the illustrious Maria, observed, "why should Miss Hamilton fret about Mr. Dudley? I am sure it is very mean-spirited if she does, for 'tis plain enough that he never had any serious notion of her. I dare say Mrs. Brudenel made the first advances; and really young men must be on their guard, as I often tell my son Captain Jones, who is quite wild about her though she treats him like a dog,—for the tune is now coldness and disdain, and all kinds of airs. But young ladies, who have themselves to provide for, must learn to sing in all keys," &c. &c.

These friendly and refined remarks were not meant for Janet's ear, though they reached it; and she found reason in their coarseness, (as far at least as Dudley was concerned,) and something more too, which roused within her that maidenly feeling that some call pride, and others self-respect.

—VI.—

It was dull weather when our travellers arrived at Paris, and Mrs. Brudenel pronounced (but not in Janet's hearing) the introductory chapter abominable. Yellow fogs were forgotten, and the climate declared to be infinitely worse than that of London. And then the streets! such streets! River-lane, or Puddle-alley would, in her opinion, have been appropriate names for the very best of them,—five or six excepted. The theatres, too, were dirty, the houses cold, the fruit insipid, the game worse, and the odious wood-fires that one could not poke, and that took care of themselves so provokingly—so inferior to coal,—and the tiresome doors, that would neither shut or open!

By-and-by came sunshine and blue skies, and

her heart softened a little. The Tuileries began to find favour for their shade, freshness, and brilliancy; the Palais Royal for its shops, its fountain, its palace, and its originality; and the Boulevards, with their country verdure and their town bustle, their breadth and fulness, their fine varying line, running along from the fashionable quarter to the joyous, and then on to the dull one, with the character of each stamped on its shops, its cafés, its people, were acknowledged to be—by day—the most varied and amusing of streets; and by night, like a traveller's tale of Bagdad at the Feast of the Lanterns.

An evening passed in admiring the unparalleled lilacs of the Luxembourg Gardens and the groupes that formed *Watteaus* under the spreading trees, and from thence to the Jardin des Plantes to see the setting sun light up the cedar of Lebanon, helped greatly to settle matters. This beautiful tree saddened Janet's fancy; it carried it back to the land of her father's wanderings. 'There is always poetry in the exiled air of a solitary tree from a far-off land, standing alone amidst strangers; when several group together they become too sociable for sympathy, but this cedar was the

type of Babylon in her captivity. Mrs. Brudenel was delighted with the gardens, the glowing sky, the foreground of rich verdure, the peopled distances, and the amusing groupes that ascended and descended the steps of the Belvedere, within which she sat watching the changes of the magic lantern; while Janet stood leaning against the light enclosure, fancying that the towers and domes which rose out of deep shadow one above another on the red horizon might be like Jerusalem, until day was almost extinguished, and the illusions of twilight were fast changing the aspect of surrounding objects. "It is better than our square," said Mrs. Brudenel, smiling. Janet smiled too, but thoughtfully.

Dislike once conquered, is very apt to make way for liking. By degrees Paris became "quite a delight of a place,—the best residence in the world for unprotected females who were not enormously rich; every thing so accessible, every one so justly appreciated,—not by their accessories, but by their own merits; no trampling, or shutting out, or beating down." In short, it was fast changing into the bright city; and Mrs. Brudenel had more than once acknowledged that he had some reason

who said that London was the paradise of the rich, but Paris the paradise of all the world.

It chanced, that about this time Mrs. Brudenel was discovered by a person of very high fashion, who had once lived in close intimacy with her brother; they had travelled long together, sometimes in toil, often in enjoyment, and had separated with mutual feelings of friendship and regret. The Count d'Auberville had not only admired and esteemed, but had also essentially served Hamilton in an affair of danger and delicacy, and thus had become warmly interested for him, as people generally do for those to whom they have been of essential service; for it is man's nature to oblige because he esteems—oftener from weaker motives—and to esteem because he has obliged. In the course of years they had, however, lost sight of each other. Hamilton's fate we already know; the count's career was more brilliant. He too had married, had risen to high dignities in the state, enjoyed a splendid revenue, a popular reputation, and was now the most renowned Amphytrion of Paris. He had but one child, a son of twenty, deformed and witty as Asmodeus, who assisted his mother, a well-bred, well-dressed, agreeable

woman, in doing the honours of the finest, the cleverest, the most select, and most brilliant coteries of that most brilliant capital. Count d'Auberville was really pleased to meet the sister of his early friend, (a very charming woman too, he observed when speaking of her to the countess, with her brother's fine eyes and air of high breeding,) and expressed much anxiety to see his daughter, politely presuming that she inherited the distinguished appearance of her family.

Visits, courtesies, invitations, followed; and it was decided that Janet, who had never seen any thing in the shape of a ball, should make her *début* at one to be given in the course of a few days by Madame d'Auberville. I shall pass over the dreams which Mrs. Brudenel had on this occasion, —rose-coloured dreams, that all issued forth from the “*porte d'ivoire*,”—and hasten to the evening; when, after having cast a glance over Janet's graceful though simple toilette, and a look that had an ovation in it at her charming figure, she proceeded with her bright charge and bright hopes, to the *hôtel d'Auberville* in a carriage of the count's, which he had obligingly sent to convey them. In the ante-room a touch to the sleeves and a slight

adjustment of the petticoat are inevitable; these duties performed, they proceeded through an atmosphere of flowers, on whose glowing buds fell the gentle radiance of innumerable shaded lamps, to a suite of perfumed saloons, hung with blue and gold, and red and gold, and white and gold, which Janet thought crowded, but where her aunt assured her there was scarcely a creature. This brilliant avenue terminated in the great saloon, whose unveiled effulgence almost blinded her unhabituated eyes. She stood a moment in mute amazement looking forward into a scene of splendour, whose bright dazzle awakened the vivid, and, as it is usually styled, eminently vulgar feeling of wonder strongly within her. It was like a palace of light; the Arabian carbuncle seemed multiplied into thousands of bright drops, and there was music more magical than the *ut re mi* of the Prince Naritzkin, and diamonds thick as hail-showers, and ladies fluttering about like birds in an aviary, flying into mischief and out of mischief, some burning the points of their wings, and others sailing off with their pretty plumage in full expansion.

To her young fancy it all seemed like a fairy

tale, an adventure of Haroun Alraschid. Already, when sliding in sideways to the Conntess d'Auberville's chariot in her first ball-dress, the pumpkin metamorphosis had crossed her mind: but now the wand of the good god-mother seemed waving vigorously over her head, and she laughed to think how like the renowned Glass Slipper she felt herself,—as far as wonder went; and though the young prince (for the ball boasted a blood royal) wore a plain suit of broad-cloth, she could not help fancying that it ought to have been a white and silver vest, set off by a Spanish hat with a plume of ostrich feathers.

Every young lady remembers her first ball; it usually makes an epoch in some way or other. She is enchanted or disenchanted, pleased or mortified, and generally, though not always, agreeably enlightened on the score of her own pretensions. Janet had no pretensions; she did not seem to be aware of her beauty, certainly not to set any value on it,—it had not helped her to keep the only heart she had ever cared to obtain. To look or listen for admiration, never occurred to her; she knew nothing of the policy of beauties, or the play-off of charms to produce effect, and there she stood

looking on at a quadrille with the admiring air of a novice, thinking how pretty one lady was, and how graceful another, and how beautifully every body danced, while she herself was the bright star of attraction; and belles wondered where she had come from, and beaux where she had been hidden, and mammas discussed her pretensions critically; one recollecting to have seen her five or six seasons before at Lady B——'s ball, while another remembered her "years ago" at Doncaster or Cheltenham,—could not recollect which,—and thought her gone off, but said it regrettingly.

Two young ladies, both pretenders (and one successfully) to beauty, discovered that she wore rouge, and both thought her countenance particularly disagreeable.

"Do you admire her?" said one in a tone that asked a negative, addressing her question to a distinguished opinion on points of taste.

"Is there any one here who does not?" was the answer.

It is said that French women are sometimes moqueuses, but they are also indulgent, especially to the young and pretty; and before Janet knew that she was the object of uncharitable animadver-

sions, she found herself surrounded by a little circle, to whom Mrs. Brudenel had been presented by Madame d'Auberville, who said kind things and courteous ones, of her and to her, in that pretty, graceful way, that French women can all assume when they fancy it.

The Duc de C—— danced with Janet, not only once, but twice; and Mrs. Brudenel, who had not before made up her mind on the point of political allegiance, immediately went over to the Opposition. Good, kind soul! it was an intoxicating moment for her; and while her vanity was in full expansion came Janet, who had at that instant concluded a quadrille, pale and red, and red and pale by turns, and whispered in her ear that she had just seen Mr. Dudley.

“Dudley!” exclaimed Mrs. Brudenel, in a tone of horror that seemed scarcely warranted by the occasion, “you have seen Mr. Dudley! And pray—that is, I suppose—I hope that he did not presume to speak to you?”

“He did not; he only bowed.”

“Bowed, indeed! Exceedingly nonchalant, and so like him; but you did not return it, my dear?”

“I did, indeed,” replied Janet. “I was not

aware of any reason for not doing so, at least (she added, speaking very low,) any that my pride would suffer me to acknowledge."

Mrs. Brudenel felt corrected, but merely said, "Well, my love, we will not say any more about it now; only if he should approach you when you leave me to join the dance, be sure that you take him coldly,—that is, not affrontedly, for that would look as if you thought him worth being angry with, but with perfect indifference, as if he were not present."

"But, dearest aunt, would it not be better to return home? I have so little skill, that I may, from ignorance, not perhaps do exactly what you wish."

"Do, my love, exactly what your own good sense and natural delicacy prompt. You have not the *savoir faire* of the world, but you have of the mind;—but home we cannot go. In the first place, you are engaged for the next dance to a person particularly introduced by Madame d'Auberville; and in the next, ought we to fly and hide ourselves, because it pleases Mr. Dudley to throw himself in our way?"

"I believe not," said Janet; and at the same

instant her partner approached to lead her to the dance, and the conversation ended.

A moment after, Dudley passed and bowed. Mrs. Brudenel bowed slightly in return, but not with the air of indifference which she wished to have maintained, and had prescribed to Janet; on the contrary, there was a flutter of anger of which she was herself distressingly sensible, but could not prevent. Had he taken her by surprise, her bow would doubtless have been perfect; but she had planned it, and like many preconcerted things, it failed in the execution.

Whatever may have been the shape it wore, the effect seemed to have intimidated Dudley, for he appeared no more in the ball-room that night; but Mrs. Brudenel fancied that she saw him, enveloped in his cloak, watching in the distance as she descended the staircase. It did not cost her a moment's reflection to decide on the line of conduct which she ought to adopt towards him. He had unfeelingly trifled with Janet's happiness, nearly destroyed it; by close though silent assiduity had won a new and unsuspecting heart, and then thrown it back with a wide scar in it, which was but just healing. And now that he beheld her admired,

followed,—the brightest flower in the garden of beauty, it was quite in his character (she said) to renew his attentions, gratify his vanity, and then turn away to the Lady Janes and Lady Marys of his *natural atmosphere*.

Janet's heart struggled against the conviction of her reason ; but her better judgment and maidenly pride marshalled themselves beside Mrs. Brudenel's arguments, and it was decided that should Mr. Dudley call, they were to be denied ; and if chance should bring them again together, he was to be slightly acknowledged as a casual and almost forgotten acquaintance. And this rigorous decision, fully justified—indeed commanded, by previous circumstances, Mrs. Brudenel was the more determined to enforce, as she had still some doubts of Janet's positive convalescence, and more than doubts of her listening to the proposition of any other alliance while Dudley's image threw itself in the way of less engaging pretenders.

But Dudley did not call, nor did he sue for, or in any way seek to reclaim the right of ancient acquaintance. Meanwhile two suitors entered the lists as candidates for Janet's favour. The one was the young Viscount d'Auberville, whose left

shoulder was always in close confabulation with his ear, whose eyes looked lovingly on each other, and from whose keen double edged wit Janet shrunk as children do from the bogie. It was a locust-wit, that destroyed every thing it rested on ; and neither Janet's beauty, or his passion, could always subdue its venom when the form of a robe, or the disposition of a flower, provoked it into activity.

The other pretender was the Count de Murville, a young, a rich, a very handsome man, of engaging address, high connexions, reputed clever, admitted amiable, and sought for by more than one active speculator, as one of the most desirable *partis* afloat.

It was one which would have met Mrs. Brudenel's entire approbation ; a character and habits that seemed calculated to ensure home enjoyment, disinterested affection,—a position to the value of which she was by no means insensible,—and all the minor aids that fuel happiness. No sooner had this bright perspective opened before her, than all difficulties vanished. Never was a mind more delightfully constructed than hers. Some people reject the good which grows by the way side, others will only gather it when in full

ear and the grain ready to fall out ; but she sifted it to the very chaff, and if a seed lurked there, brought it to light, and by the magic of a sunny mind made a gem of it.

“ I have just been thinking, my dear Janet,” said she to her niece, who sat drawing beside her, “ what a charming pair you and the Count de Murville would make.”

“ Indeed !” said Janet carelessly.

“ Yes, indeed. I have just seen you in your veil and orange-flowers.”

“ In the fire, I dare say,” answered Janet laughingly ; “ with a young Moor in a blazing turban holding up my train, and the fire-king himself pronouncing the nuptial benediction.”

“ O no ; you carry the joke too far. My fire-visions are not quite so connected as you would have them to be.”

“ Why, dear aunt, it was only last night that you saw the viscount riding on a wild boar, with a cock-feather in his cap like Mephistopheles, and the twelve signs of the zodiac hanging up in the corner. You know that you broke off the scorpion’s tail, in trying to make it visible to my dull eyes ; and you know too, if you would but own it,

that you never look up at the clouds without fancying that you see a chariot drawn by birds, or a knight on horseback, or an enchanted island in the midst of them."

"Pshaw," said Mrs. Brudenel, smiling, "how you run on. But all that has nothing to do with what I was talking of; let us be serious."

"I would rather be gay. Shall I sing my last song for you?—

There was a lady bright,
Who woo'd—

No, that is not it. Ah, now I have it:—

There was a valiant knight,
Who woo'd a lady bright,
When corn was on the ground,
And summer-buds were blowing.
But she would turn away,
And mock at his dismay,
As if his deadly wound
Were a flower in his bosom growing.

Or will you have a tenderer measure?—

I am not what I used to be,
When buds were braided in my hair;
I have forgot to smile, and he
Who used to call my beauty rare,
Is gone where others are more fair.

No, that will not do either," said Janet with a half sigh. "So I believe after all, dear aunt—

and dearer friend, I must listen to your dreams, be they of amethyst or emerald.”

And so she drew her chair closer to Mrs. Brudenel's, and heard how the Count de Murville loved her, how ardently he desired to win her hand, how noble, how entirely disinterested were the propositions which he offered to her consideration, &c. &c. Then came the enumeration of his fine qualities, his mental, personal, landed, and funded attractions, and a warm panegyric on the sincerity of a passion that only sought permission to explain itself, and asked for nothing but to be allowed to hope. There was no word of fortune, (Mrs. Brudenel added,) no scrutiny of hundredth cousins, no inquiry if Miss Hamilton had been to Devonshire House, or was received by Lady Jersey. O no! Miss Hamilton *herself* was every thing; all that he aspired to, or hoped for, on earth. “So unlike that egotistical Mr. Dudley,” she was going to add; but a look at Janet's gentle, and at that moment, melancholy countenance, checked her asperity.

“And now, my love, what shall we say to the count: will you allow him to speak to you?”

“O no! do not ask it.”

“Then will you authorize me to answer him in your name?”

“Certainly; if you will tell him frankly that I never—”

“Never!” exclaimed Mrs. Brudenel, interpreting what Janet would have said. “You do not mean to say that you refuse him?”

“I do indeed.”

“But have you reflected on the advantages, the rank, the splendour, the happiness which you reject?”

“I do not feel that I reject happiness.”

“But should I die, what would become of you?”

“What would indeed become of me!” said Janet feelingly, while tears started to her eyes. “But you are not going to die yet, my beloved aunt; and perhaps, as we have none of us leases, it may be my turn to go first.”

“Not a word more on that subject if you love me,” cried Mrs. Brudenel in a frightened tone, “but answer me with candour. Can it be that you have not forgotten Mr. Dudley?”

Janet blushed deeply, and then after a moment’s hesitation said, “I fear not.”

“Is it possible! My dear girl, where is your pride?”

“In my heart, and I hope too in my actions; yet I cannot but remember such things were,—do not misunderstand me, my dearest friend, I am not what you would call in love; I could not be so with one of whose levity of mind I am now so well convinced. I say *now*, because nothing but the marked coldness of his present conduct could have made me really believe it.”

“How is this, Janet?” exclaimed Mrs. Brudeneel; “you who are the most ingenuous of human beings are falling into mystery, like a young lady in a novel, to whom a secret is as essential as pearly teeth, or a fine-drawn eyebrow. It appears that you are not attached to Mr. Dudley,—no question of the heart,—and yet the recollections connected with his name are still sufficiently strong to influence your decision in the most momentous concern of life?”

“It seems strange, and yet believe me I use no disguise. I no longer think of Mr. Dudley as I once did; indeed, I most anxiously wish that we may never meet again. But when I recollect the days that I have passed in his society, the charms of his conversation, the rich and inexhaustible resources of his mind, the freshness and variety

which the monotony of our daily life received from the flashes of his fancy, the glow of his feeling—”

“Feeling indeed!” repeated Mrs. Brudenel; “any thing but that. Dudley may be a man of romantic fancies, if you please; but as to feeling!—why his heart is as governable as the wire-moved eyelids of a wax-doll.”

“Perhaps I do not use the right word. All that I mean to say is, that when I think of what once was, I feel my taste screwed up beyond the pitch of—I hardly know what to say,” she added, looking embarrassed; “but there are things in my memory that make what is called wit, and cleverness, and charm, appear so poor and spiritless, that I am sometimes inclined to shed tears when others far more bright and intellectual than I am are moved to laughter or admiration. And you yourself, dear aunt, how often have you expressed the same feeling? Have you forgotten the day we all passed together at your friend Mrs. Aston’s, in the backgrounds of Roehampton, when he sketched the gardener’s cottage with the old apple-tree that grew before it, and the children that were jumping in and out of the hay-cart? You remember how Mr. Dudley lifted the

little girl up and down in his arms, because she cried to go with the rest and was not big enough to take care of herself, and your saying, ‘Dudley spoils one for every one else; the heart which he has touched is safe for life from all other impressions.’”

“Ah, my child,” said Mrs. Brudenel, “you are right; there is indeed no mystery. After having sailed through the air with Dudley, you cannot lower your tone to a ramble in a paddock with another, however green and flowery it may be. My poor Janet! (she added mentally,) you have told a secret which in your innocence you were not aware of possessing.”

After this conversation, it would have been worse than idle to have urged the suit of the Count de Murville. Janet was therefore allowed to decline his addresses, which she did with the usual mollifying dose of honour, regrets, &c. I do not exactly know whether she offered him her friendship,—the silver medal usually proffered on such occasions; but that his attachment was nothing weakened by her refusal, was certain.

—VII.—

The inflictions of the witty viscount, who followed Janet like a familiar demon, the melancholy aspect of De Murville, who though without hope still haunted her steps and communicated a portion of his sadness to her spirits, united with delicious weather and some minor considerations, to induce Mrs. Brudenel to quit Paris for a short time; and Janet having fallen in love with Montmorency, where she had once spent a happy quiet day, she looked out for some unpretending nook in its neighbourhood, where a few weeks of the spring could be passed agreeably. A cottage on the edge of the forest, a little removed from the beautiful village of Andilly, offered its half-furnished rooms, delicious views, and peaceful solitude. She took it immediately, and Janet found herself once more in the midst of woods and flowers, and all the happy and ever-dear recollections of her early life.

There are vistas in the forest of Montmorency, and sunny openings, and deep glades full of the spirit of thought and of wild and distant loneliness, that if we were to fall in with them in the

defiles of the Appenines, or the soft valley of the Arno, or any other spot privileged to be beautiful, though perhaps not always really so, we should call by the sweet names of poetry and picture,—the last not sweet perhaps to sound, though beautiful in meaning. But Paris is forbidden to put in its claims in the way of scenery, and whenever the question is tried, stands capitally convicted of arid plains, chalky quarries, stone walls, and dull vineyards, that look at a distance like turnip-fields, and when near not much better.

And yet even in the Bois de Boulogne there are spots on which a painter's eye might recreate, and trees under whose broad shade a poet might commune with nature, and listen to the nightingale or the cuckoo, in utter forgetfulness of that tumultuous Paris, at whose very gate he reposes. But they are not to be found in the great alley, and strangers rarely look for them elsewhere. It is the same thing at Montmorency ; there are things hidden within its forest that might tempt the wood-gods of the olden times to dwell amongst them, scenes that speak magically to the fancy, but which are never seen by the dulcet duos who arrive *en cabriolet* at the White or the

Black Horse, or even by the gay freight of the dashing four-in-hand, who having verified the high reputation of Le Duc's* cookery, trot off on donkeys to the Hermitage, run round the garden, disturb the solemn shade which may perhaps at that moment be meditating on the terrace, and then trot back again in the gay spirit of picnic revelry, with no other impression than that of a bad road, and a good dinner.

Janet was in paradise, and even Mrs. Brudenel, who was no amateur of green fields, felt (as she expressed it) as if she could clap her wings and crow. Half the day was spent in wandering about in the forest, finding out new spots, sketching old trees, and collecting plants for Janet's herbal, two thirds of which died almost as soon as gathered.

The first week had wings, the second loitered, but the third threatened (according to Mrs. Brudenel's calculation) a foot pace, when she, to vary the scene, proposed a ride to the Hermitage of Jean Jacques. Janet, who began to perceive that her aunt's enthusiasm waned a little, agreed delightedly to the proposition; and taking their gardener as a guide, they passed through the woods, and by

* The host of the Cheval Blanc.

the great tree and the fountain of Saint René, following the wild road behind the town, and descending through the immortal chestnut-grove to the sweet, and not unpicturesque dwelling, where the hermit, who was no sage, imagined Julie, gathered apples with Teresa Levasseur, and squabbled with her troublesome mother.

I am no admirer of Rousseau as a man ; I never could forgive him the pink and silver ribbon,—to say nothing of his base betrayal of the weaknesses of his erring—but to him most kind—protectress, his heresies of the heart, which sent his children to be obliterated from the book of kindred in the chaos of a foundling-hospital, and much beside ; but I know of nothing more pitiable, of few things more touching, than the image of that fine genius, that rare and endowed mind, wedged in between the two miserable women with whom in his feebleness he had burdened himself, and submitting his half divine imaginings, his vivid ecstasies, to their dull judgment, with a credulity of good-will that presaged the ignoble subjection into which he afterwards sunk.

But Janet had not read Rousseau, and only knew that he was an unhappy man and an im-

mortal genius. She had heard enough of him to create interest, but not enthusiasm; and giving herself up to the influence of the scene, the hour, the solitude, went back in heart—as in such scenes and hours she was wont to do—to the long gone-by.

The sweet, though limited view which the garden of the Hermitage looks upon, wore its softest aspect. The sun was setting, and the golden lights were on the tops of the high trees, while the woods below were steeped in shadow. It was the fête of the three Marys, and already the rustic orchestra was sending out festive sounds from its throne of turf under the broad chestnuts, and the cheerful murmur of village groupés passing through the vineyard-paths came gaily over the garden fence, and then died away as it approached the scene of general merriment.

The distant buzz, of mirth and music, the perfect, almost solemn stillness of the immediate scene, the dying lights and gentle aspect of nature, affected Janet. The silence and retirement of a shut-in scene seem suited to awaken and feed reflection, as the vague distance does to warm and wing the imagination. Janet did not dream,—she

thought ; it was the hour of memory, and her heart (as I have said) went back to the old home, and the early years, and the thousand things which she had once called possessions and fancied were her own for ever ; but that now belonged to strangers, who slept in the chamber of her mother, and perhaps taught another little child in the dear jessamine-scented study, where she had learned her first lessons of infant love and lore.

It was on a bench already involved in shadow, and separated by some projecting branches from the path that descends into what is called the English garden, that Janet sat thus musing. Mrs. Brudeneel was in the Hermitage looking over the rags and remnants of the immortal man. There was a ring at the garden gate, and two strangers entered : it was a lady and a gentleman. The white rose was shown, the window of the chamber in which Jean Jacques had slept pointed out, and the gardener, observing that the bust was but a few steps off, would have led the way to it ; but to this proposition a very soft voice replied, in good French but with a foreign accent, “ Thank you, not yet. We will first repose here a little.”

Janet looked through the bushes, and saw close

to her, but so separated that she herself could not be seen, a beautiful melancholy face, pale yet bright, like the evening star. It was not the face of a girl with the rich touches of hope, the vague fire-fly light of its new-born fancies and feelings still fresh upon it, but rather of one who, though yet in the morning of her day, was faded by premature sorrow; it was evident that the illusions of life were over, and the realities already begun. Janet thought so, and while she looked at her admiringly, for she had never seen any thing so beautiful, the lady sat down, and her companion, whose figure was entirely concealed, placed himself beside her.

“Do not ask of me,” said the same soft voice which had already spoken, “that which I cannot grant. You know how hard it is for me to refuse you any thing, but I tremble to think of it.”

“And yet, my Emily,” replied another voice, “you tell me that your heart is still the same.”

“Ah, can you doubt it? Think of the sacrifices——but I am wrong to call them so; affection such as mine rejects a word so selfish.”

“Do you then dread the world?”

“Ah, Dudley! that question from you?”

“It is true, my Emily,—I confess that I am wrong; but think how dear you are to me, how earnestly and above all things I wish to see you happy,—happy as the fond allegiance of devoted love can make you. To a mind like yours, life unembellished by affection, worn out in solitude, unconfident in hope, alarmed at chances, must be misery. Your very tenderness of nature, your purity—”

“Say rather my wretchedness,” interrupted the lady, rising as she spoke, as if she feared to listen longer. As she did so, something dropped on the ground; her companion stooped to pick it up. A few words were then uttered in a low tone, to which the lady answered faintly, “My husband gave it to me.”

One must have known what it is to believe in excellence, and to find that belief changed into the conviction of guilt, to imagine the pang that wrung poor Janet’s heart as she caught from Dudley’s own lips the proofs of his utter depravity. She had heard that he was a male coquette, one who won hearts and then slighted them, but she had never quite believed it. It was true that in his conduct towards herself he had given evidence of

egotism, caprice,—perhaps levity ; but there might have been reasons, circumstances may have existed, in short, she could not bear to pull down the beautiful image which she had set up on her heart's altar. But here was guilt, palpable and deep guilt ; it was plain even to Janet's ignorance, that Dudley was acting a base and cruel part. Never even to her had he spoken in a voice more full of tender earnestness ; it was the same delightful voice that had so often beguiled her from thought to hope, and back again to those sweet musings in which her sorrowful ones were, for the time, forgotten. No other voice was ever like it ; it seemed like the music of the soul, and never did its accents more skilfully assume the tone of deep and real feeling, than when employed to seduce a gentle and confiding heart from its true allegiance.

“ Wicked and perfidious man,” said Janet in bitterness of spirit, “ may your schemes be defeated ! May the unhappy lady discover, before it be too late, the culpable designs which that sweet voice, those accents that seem so heartfelt, have hitherto concealed from her ! ”

At this moment Mrs. Brudenel came towards her in an agitated way ; and pointing to the two

persons who were slowly quitting the garden, (the lady leaning on the arm of her companion, who still seemed to speak to her with earnestness,) said, "Have you seen him?"

"Seen and heard," replied Janet mournfully. "But it grows late; let us return."

"And without delay," said Mrs. Brudenel, "or we shall be benighted in the forest."

They rode home slowly and silently. There was still light in the west when they reached their wood-side cottage, and Janet sat down on a bench before the door, while Mrs. Brudenel placed herself beside her, and listened with less surprise than she expected to the detail of Dudley's turpitude.

And yet she was far from having imagined him so utterly divested of moral feeling, so profoundly corrupted; she had rather believed him to possess a mind finely organized, but not endued with sufficient strength to repel the force of factitious opinions; a mind originally noble, but warped out of its natural bearing by the influence of artificial distinctions. But now the illusion was destroyed, and the perversity of his real nature stood out in its full deformity. He was no longer a weak, but a guilty man; yet, though she expressed horror,

disgust, disappointment, and felt them all, there was still something not absolutely disagreeable to her in the discovery. As Dudley was so base, it was certainly well (she thought) that Janet should be aware of it. She might now perhaps be prevailed upon to think of one, whose exclusive attachment might be favourably opposed to the utter heartlessness of his rival. In short, something might be hoped for; and so, after many soothing words, and much of interest, really felt and affectionately expressed, for Janet's present sorrow, she retired to her chamber to build castles, and Janet to hers to lie awake, thinking how those which her fond and youthful fancy had erected, lay now in ruins.

—VIII.—

There were no shutters to Janet's window. A pale light streamed in; she rose and opened it. The air was pure and still; not a leaf moved, and the perfume of flowers ascended in a rich steam of fragrance from the garden beneath. The moon looked over the edge of the dark hills behind

which it had lately risen, and soaring slowly upwards, sailed along with its mild attendant planet through the starry and illimitable sea, where the paler constellations watch nightly, and the bright lamp of evening hymns the glory of its mistress in sweet and magical strains, sometimes heard by solitary men whose gifted ears have been suddenly opened to such music. As Janet looked up, a thin cloud passed over the face of the moon, and received the colours of its halo. "Are you there, my father?" she said, as she gazed upon it; "my mother, do you look from heaven upon me?"

A nightingale in the adjoining thicket opened its wild throat, and sent out a gush of song that seemed to fill the encircling solitude. "My bird of birds," said Janet, "how full your sweet notes are of the past! It seems to me that I am again in my father's house, that I look once more upon my native woods, my own green forest of Friarslee."

One thought brought others, and Janet leant upon the window, and slowly repeated some lines which had been given to her by Dudley. But she was not thinking then of Dudley; it was the song of the bird, and the passing cloud, and the memory

of the dead, that brought them to her recollection. She loved them for their sadness, and it was with tears that she repeated to herself these simple words:—

She look'd again,—she look'd again,—
 'Twas nothing but a passing cloud ;
 And now and then a leaf flew by,
 And now and then a stifled sound
 Amongst the scented grass was heard,
 As if of music under ground,
 Or the low whisp'ring of a bird.

She look'd again,—she look'd again,—
 Her step was swift, her eye was bright ;
 She listen'd like a startled fawn,
 And then she fled,—the whimp'ring wind
 Within the bearded thistle stirr'd ;
 No other sound of any kind
 Was heard, except the whisp'ring bird.

She look'd again,—she look'd again,—
 Her cheek grew pale, her heart grew cold :
 “ 'Tis nothing but the sea-bird's cry,”
 She knew not 'twas a dying groan,—
 “ O come !” she said. No step was heard,
 Nor sound, but of her voice alone,
 And that of the poor whisp'ring bird.

“ O look no more ! O look no more !
 Fair girl, thine eyes will never see
 The eyes they seek ;—they're clos'd in death ;
 And that proud lip that on thee smil'd,
 Will never utter loving word.
 There's nothing living in this wild
 But thou,—and that poor whisp'ring bird.

A rustling in the trees startled Janet, and while she looked towards the spot from whence the sound proceeded, a figure issued from their shadow. It was a man who, passing into the light, directed his steps along the edge of the forest. "How strangely (thought Janet) does the fancy work? It is probably a peasant returning to his village, yet to my confused eye he looks like Dudley." Then closing the window, she lay down to rest, or rather to think, for sleep did not visit her eyelids till long after the sun had risen.

Poor Janet ! how deeply was her heart lacerated. She might have forgotten Dudley, and yet been happy ; but to remember him discoloured by guilt, was terrible. It darkened her view of human nature, and would have weakened that beautiful confidence in the aspect of virtue, which is so natural and lovely in youth, if the candour of her mind would have allowed her to become suspicious. Meanwhile time wore on, and the Count de Murville's visits, which had never been wholly discontinued, became more frequent, and though coldly received by Janet, were obviously encouraged by her aunt. De Murville was (as I have already said) a person of more than common endowment,

and there was something in the constancy of his passion that gave an interest to his manner and appearance, which they might not perhaps have had under other circumstances. Not that I would say that the perseverance of unreturned love is always interesting; on the contrary, it frequently excites ridicule, often displeasure. But De Murville's distinguished character, his external advantages, which were of a high cast, and the proud delicacy of mind which continually and evidently (though without success) worked against the influence of an unshared passion, gave a colouring of dignified romance to his attachment, which made many fair ladies envy its object.

At length, not a day passed without a visit from the true knight of the forest bower; and when he had departed, Mrs. Brudenel, too adroit to disgust Janet by dwelling tiresomely on his merits, always contrived to place whatever he had said or done in the most advantageous and engaging point of view. Then came the comparison, not made but insinuated, between this faithful lover and the cold and culpable Dudley; and then the many reasons which her tender and anxious heart perpetually suggested, to conquer Janet's deep and extreme

reluctance. But a thousand times more powerful than her reasoning were the ever-evident, though gently-urged wishes of her aunt, whose mild ascendancy was daily gaining strength, and gradually subjugating Janet's will by the power of affection. Often would she say to herself, "Do I not owe her a sacrifice? How many has she made for me. Has she not left the home, the country of her heart, her old friends, old habits, old affections,—all for me? and that at a time of life when such changes are most painful, and with such heart-whole good faith,—no regrets, no reverting to things loved and resigned,—that one might suppose her voluntary exile to be the completion of her fondest wishes? And one word from me can make her happy," thought Janet; and that single idea did more for De Murville's cause, than all the rhetoric of man could have effected.

Perhaps it would have been more interesting, more according to the established rules of romance, had Janet vowed eternal fidelity to the recollection of one of whose utter unworthiness she possessed full evidence, and who she now believed had never loved her, instead of yielding to such homely motives. But truth must be told, even when it

does not tell well ; and the fact was, that Janet did yield,—slowly, reluctantly, sorrowfully, but still she yielded, with something like a smile in the presence of her aunt, but with many and many a tear in the solitude of her chamber.

One thing, however, she required before she would consent to receive the count's renewed addresses, and that was, that he should be fully informed of the interest which another had possessed in her affections, and of the circumstances which had converted it into—dislike, I think Mrs. Brudenel said ; probably for want of a more appropriate term.

“ If,” said Janet, “ he should be inclined to think lightly of me for what has been, it is better that he should know that he has cause to do so while there is yet time to draw back. Besides, he merits to be treated with perfect candour, and if I cannot feel for him the sentiment which he deserves to inspire, and which you tell me will come with time, at least I would not abuse his confidence by a deception, or add to my own perhaps ungrateful coldness, the weight of a recollection made culpable by concealment.”

The disclosure was made, and received—as was

natural—with emotion ; but the beloved is always right, and De Murville found an excuse for Janet's credulity in the candour of an innocent and unsuspecting nature.

At length the marriage-day was fixed, and as it approached, Janet's horror of a union in which her affections took no part, increased frightfully. But the word which she had given, she had not courage to recall ; her gentle spirit shrunk from the thought of destroying the hopes and peace of one who really loved her, and overthrowing the fabric of happiness which her fond aunt had raised, and loved, and decorated, until it had become the worship of her heart.

A few days before the appointed one, Janet sat at her chamber-window and looked out upon the forest, and up to the blue and beamy sky ; but her thoughts were not on either. Before her lay the portraits of her parents : she kissed them both again and again, and large drops fell from her eyes and obscured their beloved lineaments. She wiped them off, but others came. "It is useless," said the sorrowful girl, as she replaced the portraits in the case which was her constant companion, "I cannot see them to-day ; my eyes are dim, but they are in my heart. O that I were in the old church-

yard beside them ! My sweet mother, my kind, dear father,—why cannot I rejoin you ! why cannot I die now !” and she dropped on her knees and prayed fervently.

Is there a heart, which in some heavy or excruciating moment, in fear, in indecision, in sorrow, has not acknowledged the power, or believed in the efficacy of prayer,—the wretch’s privilege, the believer’s consolation ? Janet rose from her knees more calm ; and while she bathed her eyes, and tried to efface the traces of tears from their swollen lids, Mrs. Brudenel’s voice called to her from beneath the window. She joined her immediately, and found every thing arranged for a forest excursion, the long-eared cavalry ruminating patiently by the cottage fence, and their gardener and guide, Jules, waiting to conduct them.

“As we shall have but two days more at Montmorency,” said Mrs. Brudenel, “I thought it might give you pleasure to take leave of some of your favourite haunts.”

“You are always kind,” replied Janet, and burst into tears.

“Tears !” exclaimed Mrs. Brudenel, “do you shed tears, my love ?”

“ I feel a little nervous ; but it will be nothing. Which way shall we ride ? ”

“ Wherever you like best ; I have no choice. ”

“ Then suppose we go up through the forest by the wild path, that looked so beautiful as we crossed it yesterday at sunset ; we have not yet explored in that direction. ”

Mrs. Brudenel assented, and they rode on silently. The path was in many places so narrow, that one was obliged to follow the other. Janet, who was the best mounted, rode on first, and had advanced a short distance before her aunt, when at a sudden turn of the track, a woman in the dress of a sister of charity stood beside her. Janet would have drawn up to let her pass ; but she sprang upwards a step or two on a bank, and as Janet rode by, leant towards her and said, in a singular tone of voice, “ Fair lady, if you are for holy Ursula, God speed you ; but if for the world’s love, go where the smoke rises, ” and in a moment her black robe had disappeared through the bushes.

“ Who spoke ? ” inquired Mrs. Brudenel, who just then turned into the path.

“ A woman, ” replied Janet, “ who was crossing through the wood. ”

“What an odd voice she has.”

“Odd enough,” said Jules, who now approached, “if it be, as I judge, Sister Mathurine.”

“And who is she?”

“One that does much good, and some harm; a poor half-witted soul, who sees things that none but herself can see. Some say she is inspired, others that some early sorrow has troubled her brain; but be that as it may, she is as harmless as an infant, and if you were sick and wanted her care, would come barefooted through the briars to give it to you. The poor have no nurse like Sister Mathurine, though she does frighten people sometimes with her strange stories, and there are some who don't much like her coming about them.”

At this moment, a wreath of blue smoke curled up spirally through a group of trees at a short distance, and immediately after, the cottage from which it rose appeared on a green opening a few paces from the path, which was there so rough and obstructed by brambles as to be scarcely passable. An old man was shaking down walnuts from a tree before the door, which a sturdy urchin gathered up and stowed into a basket.

“What a delicious spot!” exclaimed Janet.

“And a very opportune one,” added Mrs. Brudenel; “for see, the big drops are already falling. We shall have a storm presently.”

The old man, who had been making the same observation, invited the party into his cottage; and having helped Mrs. Brudenel to dismount, led the way into a pleasant dwelling, with an air of order and comfort about it that does not always redeem the nakedness of a French cottage. A woman sat at work in a window; she was the old man's daughter, and a widow, who with the help of her son, took care of him and his house, and made his old age happy.

“We have a better room than this,” said he cordially, “with a pleasant view upon the forest, if the ladies would like to rest there till the storm is over. One of the prince's gamekeepers lived here formerly, and added it to the cottage. Nanine will show you the way, while I go and look after my walnuts.”

The woman got up from her work, and opened a door into another room, in which were two casement windows profusely hung with vines, and both looking on a forest glade which, for its depth and shade, its solitude and freshness, might have passed

for a corner of Tinian, or the lonely Eden of Juan Fernandez.

“What a gentle solitude!” said Janet, “so soft and silent; nothing stern or fearful in its stillness. How full and free the arching of the branches, how deep the shade—more beautiful even than the bushy hollows of our woods at Andilly.”

“What did the woman say to you, my love?” said Mrs. Brudenel, whose thoughts were evidently not with the Dryades.

Janet repeated her wild words.

“O, that was all; some mad-woman, I suppose.” And then leaning against the window she fell into a reverie, which from the expression of her countenance seemed a painful one.

In fact, Janet’s tears, her pale and pensive aspect, and the evident, but unsuccessful effort which she made to appear cheerful, struck and startled Mrs. Brudenel, and threw her into a train of thought that became every moment more perplexed and painful. “Is it possible (said she mentally) that the idea of her approaching marriage can cause this obvious change, which to-day seems to me so marked, that I can only wonder at my own dulness in not having observed it before?”

But my mind was all in the future; and dreaming, planning, anticipating, I forgot the present, forgot my poor Janet, though I only sought to give her—friendless as she is—a protector more likely to go through life with her than myself. But it is all evident; I used the influence of affection unduly, and with my sanguine, inconsiderate head, would have made a victim of my idol.” And then came a thousand circumstances of confirmation before unthought of; and at last, the distressing conviction that Janet’s heart was not a party in the projected marriage, or rather, had obviously taken the other side of the question.

While these thoughts were oppressing her mind, Janet, who was trying to turn hers out of their sad channel, examined some drawings that were pinned up against the wall, two or three of which were rather cleverly done, in a light sketchy way; and it struck her, as she looked at them, that the scenery of which they attempted to give an idea, had something of an English air.

Nanine, in answer to Janet’s inquiries, said that they had been done by her son, who was thought to have some turn that way, and who would willingly do nothing else but draw all the day long.

The gentleman, (she added,) who had recently lodged with them, had kindly given him some instructions, and lent him his own drawings to copy from.

“I think he must have been an Englishman,” said Janet, “from the character of the scenery?”

“Yes, madam, the gentleman was English; but he took to the country here, and used to wander about in the forest from sunrise till nightfall.”

“What was his name?” inquired Mrs. Brudenel, whom the word English had awakened.

“We never knew his name,” replied Nanine; and added feelingly, “but we knew how good he was, and it grieved us much to lose him. I thought my son would have fallen ill, he fretted so.”

“Was he married?”

“I do not know, madam, (hesitatingly,) I am not sure.”

“He was then always alone?”

“Not always, madam. Latterly a young lady came with him here frequently, and they would stroll about in the forest for hours together; and in the evening they would walk over the hills towards Margancy, and then we saw no more of him for the night.”

“He returned, I suppose, with the lady to Paris?”

“My son thought so; for he once saw them get into a carriage, which waited at the foot of the hill, and drive off in that direction.”

“Was the lady handsome?”

“I am a poor judge of beauty, madam; but to my eye she was the loveliest person I have ever seen, though her look was sorrowful, and her voice as if there were tears in it.”

Mrs. Brudenel mused, and Janet turned to the window to conceal her emotion.

“But he left some scraps behind,” continued Nanine; “will you look at them? I have kept them because they were his, though I cannot read the language they are written in.” Then opening a drawer, she took out from it an old sketch-book, in which four or five torn leaves alone remained, and gave it to Mrs. Brudenel.

She opened it. On the first leaf was written in a well-known hand, the letters H. D., and under them in pencil, “How vital is the solitude of nature! but the solitude of the heart is loneliness. My poor Emily! your heart and mine are like the desolate mansion, in which the voice cries that finds no answerer.”

Underneath was a slight sketch, pasted on the leaf, which Mrs. Brudenel instantly recognised as one that she had seen Dudley make of the gardener's cottage at Roehampton, to which Janet had once alluded. The hay-cart was there, and the old apple-tree, and the rustic seat inserted in the garden fence, and canopied with honeysuckle, and below were written the lines that follow:—

THE PAST.

O that familiar voice ! which never, never,
 By my tenacious heart can be forgot ;
 And the young day-break smile, that comes for ever
 Dancing before the eyes that seek it not.
 It is not good to dwell upon the days
 When such things were for me,—for me who now
 Must put away the hope that idly sways
 A heart, in whose parch'd soil dull weeds alone can grow.

For I must journey on to other lands,
 Where never flowers of home their buds unclose,
 To wish 'midst all a southern sun commands
 For the gay pansy, or the common rose,
 That grew within the garden ever dear,
 With ruddy apple blended, and the thorn
 On which the currant ripen'd,—humble cheer,
 But well worth golden fruit of foreign climate born.

Yet were there moments when the charm, decaying,
 Would yield to present sunshine ; and the heart,
 From what it first had lov'd too lightly straying,
 Would taste those sweets which other joys impart.

Put as the future seems more narrow growing,
 And falsehood and false hopes their shadows cast,
 O, how the morning sky of life seems glowing!
 O, how the heart turns back, and whispers with the past!

After these lines followed the profile of a female, half effaced, but with the hair arranged something in the way that Janet usually wore hers; then another attempt at the same head, in which the likeness was too strong to be mistaken. Again on the next leaf the same profile was repeated; and near to it was another, bearing a striking resemblance to the fair but mournful face of the hermitage garden. Nanine pointed to it, and said, "That is the lady who used to visit Monsieur." Beneath was written,

"19th of May.—This is the anniversary of poor Emily's wedding-day. How brightly it rose, and how beautiful she was,—beautiful and happy! how little did we think that we adorned a victim. The wedding-day! the day of joy, that often ends in bitterness!

O, how sweet it is to sit upon the grass amongst the flow'rs,
 When the ev'ning air dies in the boughs, and white leaves fall
 in show'rs
 From the crimson-spotted cistus, who loves the king of day,
 And will not live in paler lights when his has passed away.

This cistus is like many a heart, but it matters not for why;
I was talking of the grass and flow'rs, and the perfum'd winds
that die

Among the scented blossoms; but my mind must needs grow sad,
Thinking of old beloved things, that once could make it glad.

I thought upon a summer's morn, when a gentle bride arrayed
In budding flow'rs, and curious gems, and pearls in cunning
braid;

While tears were in her downcast eye, and gentle sighs did steal,
And her sister wept beside her, and her mother's cheek was pale:

Look'd upon the slender lilies she had planted with her hand,
And kiss'd the very leaves that grew around where she did stand;
Then mournfully with loving arms her mother did caress,
And 'gainst her sister's girlish cheek, her girlish cheek did press.

But better think no more of that,—'twas a day of joy and care,
For wedding-days are always so,—'twas nothing new or rare;
Let's think upon the summer sun that sinks into the sea,
Ah no! nor grass, nor sun, nor flow'rs, are now the same to me.

Strange things are thought and memory, that come we know
not why;

A passing cloud, a falling show'r, will sometimes wake a sigh
For things that nothing have to do with cloud or falling show'r:
O heart! thou art the mystery, the magic, and the pow'r.

How close the secret of the past lies hid within thy folds,
'Tis like a thought unspoken,—a story never told;
Should nothing kindred waken it, 'twill silent long remain,
But a breath — a word — and the brief link becomes the
lengthen'd chain.

Some scraps of paper, which had been torn and
joined together, (Nanine said by her son, who
loved to preserve every thing that had belonged to

Monsieur,) were pasted on the last leaf. They were the fragments of a note in the hand-writing of a female, of which these broken lines were alone discernible: "But not to-day—to-morrow if you will. Edward is certainly in Paris; B—— has seen him,—my head is distracted; such days and nights!—perhaps you can come here; your presence would give me strength; adieu till then, kind and dear brother. E. M."

"Brother!" exclaimed Mrs. Brudenel, as her eye glanced over the fragments. "Good heaven, it is his sister! how hasty and unjust we have been. But who could have imagined it? *We* certainly were not obliged to do so, who scarcely knew of her existence, and still less of her misfortunes. Yet I wish it had been otherwise, and that we had taken a little more time for inquiry;—and you too, my love, feel, I am sure, on this point as I do."

But Janet did not answer. Her cheeks glowed, her eye glanced over the fragments, tears stood on the points of her long eyelashes, but the beating of her heart, the press of joyful emotions, left no way for words. At length, she returned the pressure of her aunt's hand, and faintly articulated, "Thank heaven, he is not guilty! I thought it—I knew it!"

Mrs. Brudenel smiled archly.

“At least, I hoped it,” said Janet, “I am sure I hoped it. I know now that I did so; it was that hope which was always working in my heart.”

“And he loves you still, he has never forgotten you?”

Janet blushed, and was silent. She would fain have put down her joy entirely to the account of Dudley's justification; but her aunt repeated, “He loves you still?”

Janet raised her eyes towards her aunt's face, with one of those indescribable but explicative looks, of which words are but imperfect translators. “I think—I hope—that is, I believe—”

“How eloquent you are, my love,” interrupted Mrs. Brudenel; “such a flow of words, and so beautifully sustained! Really, if you talk thus, some leaden dealer in rhymes will borrow you for a muse. But the rain has ceased; let us return homewards, we have much to talk of.”

“But the book—”

“O, we will ask the good woman to lend it to us, and Jules will go bail for our honesty.”

This was easily arranged; and having bade adieu to Nanine, with the promise of ere long pay-

ing her a second visit, they took the shortest track through the forest, and were soon in the old spot, on the green bench before the door of their cottage.

How beautiful every thing appeared ! how sweet was the face of nature ! how fresh the colouring of the woods, and the sounds within them—the chirping of birds—the busy hum of insect wings—how full of joy they seemed ! It was the happy heart that had thrown its sunshine over them ; it was the light of the mind that rayed itself out upon the landscape, that empurpled the hills, glistened on the small lake in the valley, and warmed the whistle of the birds into the music of paradise.

How the good aunt talked ! and how the gentle Janet listened !—with smiles on her lips, and tears in her eyes, and that something in her heart which neither tears or smiles could explain ; for there is no language either of lip or eye, that can paint the intermediate shades between the emotion which yet partakes of the tremulous apprehensiveness grown into the mind with long-indulged-in sorrow, and the glad feeling native to the young heart, which accepts delightedly the first chance of hope, never doubting that it is certainty.

—IX.—

It was now impossible to think of a union with De Murville. Janet, who had shrunk from it with a feeling little short of horror when she believed Dudley culpable, would now have preferred death to its completion; and Mrs. Brudenel, who had been wretched from the moment of discovering that Janet's heart rebelled against her favourite project, felt as if a weight of lead had been removed from her own. But how to disclose this to De Murville? how destroy the hope on which life itself seemed suspended? It was painful, difficult, cruel,—but inevitable. There was but one way of acting, and that was to use the utmost candour, to explain every thing frankly, guarding only the secret of the unflattering sentiment of repugnance which Janet felt towards him.

“Not for worlds,” said Janet, “would I wound his heart unnecessarily. But rejoice with me that he already knows the secret of my early preference. Had I concealed it, how mean and artificial I should now appear! how hateful to myself, and how full of duplicity in the eyes of one who believed me without guile!”

The case was one of extreme delicacy, and Mrs. Brudenel determined to write to De Murville that evening. "At present, my love," said she, "the soup cools; and in the midst of those divine things called hope, love, and joy, one must dine, though it is a low kind of necessity too, I grant you. But here is the mad-woman coming through the wood. Let us go in."

They entered the cottage, and the sight of Sister Mathurine having recalled her prophecy, "How odd it is," said Janet, "that these wandering minds should strike out things that astonish sane ones."

"O, they make lucky hits, like the gipsy fortune-tellers who infest our race-grounds, whispering at every carriage-door, 'You've a pleasant face, lady; you'll soon have great riches, ma'am; there's a letter coming over sea to you, miss,' and so on, till the cap fits somebody, and then they cry out, 'How very extraordinary!'"

"And yet it was odd that literally where the smoke rose—"

"May I come in?" interrupted a voice at the window. It was the sister of charity; the window was low, and she leant in upon it, repeating her question.

“I wish she would go away,” said Mrs. Brudenel, who feared her crazy freaks. “My good friend, I do not think you can have any thing to say to me?”

“Not to you, certainly; but to her who sits there by you.”

“Poor thing!” said Janet. “Let her come in; she looks very harmless.”

“Harmless enough,” said Jules, who was placing some flower-pots on a stand, “and kind too, though not always right in the head. But it’s best to let her in, at any rate; if you send her away, you don’t quite know whom you may anger.”

Janet opened the door, and with a sweet smile prayed Sister Mathurine to enter. She did so; and approaching the table, said, with no ill grace,

“Will you, ladies, allow a robe of frieze to sit down with you? It is late, but I have not tasted any thing since yesterday. Our order has its denials; Heaven has given us hardships, that we may learn to bear them.”

Mrs. Brudenel contemplated for an instant her gentle countenance, and felt ashamed of the momentary harshness to which she had given way. To make amends for it, she took her hand, and

pressing it kindly, placed a chair for her beside her own, while Janet hastened to put wine before her; but she would not taste it, drinking only water and eating sparingly of the simplest food. Her words were few, but calm and reasonable, and she answered some inquiries which Mrs. Brudenel made about the rules of her order, with much intelligence.

“You have come a long way this morning?” said Mrs. Brudenel in a tone of inquiry.

“Only from the white house behind the forest; but I had watched all night beside a dying woman, and my heart was weary. My way is to St. Denis, where I have a home with other sisters of our order; but the good people of the villages round here know me, and are pleased when I come among them. They believe in my skill, (she added with a smile,) and will take my simple medicines with more faith than more skilful compounds. Sometimes I feel strangely, and then I love to wander in those lonely places where the air comes at once from heaven; I am the better for it. The wood-sounds cheer my heart, and when I hear the ruddock sing amongst the winter berries, or the hammer of the little woodhatch, it beats less heavily.”

Janet's eyes filled with tears. There was nothing remarkable in the words of the poor sister of charity, but her voice and figure had something in them inexpressibly touching.

“Your eyes have tears in them,” said the sister. “They have been in mine, too,—but now, never. When the eyes weep, the heart is happy; mine is sad, that which the palmer-worm hath left hath the locust eaten,—and yet I laugh,” and then she laughed as if the thought had joy in it; but it was a hollow sound, a “mirth in which there was heaviness.”

“I wish she would not laugh,” said Mrs. Brudenel, in English, “it wrings one's heart.”

“Ha!” exclaimed the sister, “your strange language,—how oddly it sounds. I think I was in your country once, but I am not certain; I have lived so long on earth, that my memory no longer serves me.”

“And yet you look still young?”

At this remark her countenance underwent a singular change, the pupil of her eye dilated, her cheek coloured suddenly, the habitual gentleness of her countenance gave way to a wild and feverish expression, and in the same odd tone in which she

had addressed Janet in the forest, she said, "When Simon Peter cast his nets into the Lake of Genesareth, I was with him; I saw the star rise in Bethlehem, and drank from the wine-cups in Canaan. I have been in paths which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen; the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed it by.* I have lain like Behemoth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reeds and fens; the shady trees have covered me with their shadow; the willows of the brook have compassed me round about. I sang with the daughter of Judah in her banishment; and when the wolves, terrible as in the days of Habakkuk the prophet, came down into the forest, I sought in its depths Him who made the seven stars and Orion. I knew your father," she continued, turning suddenly to Janet, "in the Holy Land, where the Cross is seen nightly in the heavens; in Rama midst the lamentations of the women; in the wilderness of Judea where John preached."

Janet grew pale; her father had lived long in those lands, and though the words of Sister Ma-

* Job.

thurine could be nothing more than the accidental combinations of insanity, she shuddered.

“You fear me,” said the sister with a smile that, like the flower of the nightshade, seemed to spring out from a deadly root; “some may have cause, but not you—not you. The holy Ursula, who is above in heaven, guards such as you are; such sat within the tents of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. Beautiful and well favoured they were, and the wings of angels overshadowed them. But the people of the world, what are they but the flock of the slaughter; and the bounds of the world but the border of wickedness?” Then suddenly rising up and standing before Janet, she added, “He whom you love is true,—the thought is in his heart that will never leave it. Look not like the mother of Sisera out of the window; cry not through the lattice, ‘Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot?’ for you shall be blessed like Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite,—blessed above all the women in the tent.” Then suddenly softening, while her voice recovered something of its natural tone, she took Janet’s hands; and holding them gently within hers, drew her nearer towards her, and

looking intently in her face, said, "Fear nothing; those who bore the prophet on their wings into the country of Chaldea to them of the captivity, are with you. There is a woman, who sits by Saint Michael's well at midnight, who could tell you more than I can. But you must not go to her; no, no; it is not well for maidens to wander about the woods in the dark hours."

As she continued speaking, her voice sunk gradually into a tone of extreme gentleness, the colour faded from her cheek, and she again became the poor sister of charity, meekly performing the duties of her holy calling, and journeying without staff or scrip from the bed of pain to that of death, with the humble but courageous piety of a real Christian; the flush of unnatural excitement had subsided, the chord, accidentally struck, no longer vibrated, and taking up the small bundle of medicinal herbs, which was all that she carried with her, she thanked Mrs. Brudenel for her hospitality, and smiling kindly on Janet, took her leave.

"How unaccountable are the wild lights of a disordered mind," said Janet thoughtfully.

"Mere raving," answered Mrs. Brudenel; "but your nerves, my love, are agitated by the events of

the morning, and the poor soul's random eloquence, and still more her sweet voice and gentle aspect have affected your imagination."

"That may be; but what she said of my father—was it not singular?"

"It was an odd coincidence, but nothing more. It is evident that only certain chords of Sister Mathurine's mind are affected; she has some wild recollections connected with her knowledge of Holy Writ, and what she said to you she has probably said to many whose fathers have never been in Palestine, and who therefore saw nothing in her unconnected words but the broken links of some far-off chain of thought, which no longer hung upon each other."

But Janet was not quite convinced. She had not yet outlived the age of romance and mystery, and the scattered reason of the poor sister seemed to her to emit an unusual light, as the crushed flower sends out a stronger perfume than when it grew and bloomed upon its stalk. But matters of more moment were to be discussed, and Sister Mathurine was forgotten.

—X.—

Two good and kind hearts, and two heads, each with its fair proportion of brains, felt and thought, and thought and felt, with pens and ink, and wax and paper before them, for one, two, three hours, without producing any thing that came near to the expression which they wished to convey to De Murville of their feelings.

“ All this perplexity,” said Mrs. Brudenel, “ is the consequence of my want of penetration and thought. Had I studied your heart, I should have learned how it was affected ; but I wheedled, and reasoned, and coaxed, and argued you into the sacrifice of your happiness——O, no extenuation ; I am guilty, and ought to suffer—at least exposure. I did not, it is true, command, but I used undue influence ; and now I am reduced to the old palliatives, ‘ I thought it was for your happiness ; I did it for the best,’ &c.”

“ All that you do is suggested by kindness,” returned Janet ; “ and all that you have done for me might be registered above, where acts and motives are written down together. But this letter——”

“ To-morrow,” said Mrs. Brudenel, “ I shall

be beforehand with Aurora, and I promise that when we meet at breakfast, the embarrassing and most painful task shall be accomplished. But at present we will go to bed; and so good night, dearest."

To-morrow came, and with it the letter, written with candour and feeling; but before the messenger had departed, came one from the Count de Murville, which rendered its explanations unnecessary. Mrs. Brudenel opened it, and read as follows:—

"I can no longer, my dear madam, remain silent on a subject which has long pressed upon my heart, and now so alarms my sense of all that is right and honourable, that the silence which I have too long maintained, becomes insupportable.

"You well know how much beyond all other things I cherished the idea of calling Miss Hamilton my own, that my soul had no other hope, my mind no other thought, my heart no other anticipation, I looked forward into life, and there she stood filling up the space which had no other object in it but herself,—nothing on which my eyes could rest even for a moment. Yet even then, the idea that I owed a consent (yielded with a reluctance to which even love could not blind itself) to the

defection, and still more—or, perhaps, I should say entirely—to the unworthiness of another, often interfered its shade between me and my dream of happiness. My honour also often asked me a perplexing question; it was this,—Is that other really unworthy? and I evaded the reply. And yet, when with the frankness that distinguishes your character you disclosed to me the secret of your niece's former preference, and the discovery which you had made of Mr. Dudley's culpability, a confused recollection crossed my mind of something about his having a sister, then at Paris, whose beauty and misfortunes had made her an object of peculiar interest. I remembered the report, but dared not inquire into its truth. I felt that I ought to speak of it, but could not; my heart found a thousand subterfuges, which all who have loved as I have done will understand. I tried to persuade myself that Mr. Dudley was a libertine, who well deserved to lose the jewel which he could not wear in honour; and, if I may say what seems inexplicable, almost persuaded myself into a belief which I felt was an injustice.

“And thus I lulled my conscience, until at length it ceased to trouble me, and my heart ran

over with the intoxication of hope, of almost certainty. But within a few hours a circumstance, not necessary to detail, has put me in possession of a fact, which I feel myself bound in honour to disclose, though well aware that all which renders existence precious to me hangs upon the result of this revelation. I cannot imagine life without her. The sun may rise, but there will be no daylight for the closed heart—But of this no more; I feel that I shall want all the strength which I am thus idly wasting.

“Dudley is innocent,—you may believe it, for I tell you so,—I, to whom his guilt would have ensured happiness. The lady who was with him at the hermitage is his sister, and the wife of Lord Edward Montague. A series of injurious treatment caused her to quit his house and seek an asylum with a female relative resident in Paris, and who had been her friend in childhood. This unfortunate lady is—as you described her—a person of remarkable beauty; her marriage was one of romantic affection; and love—stronger in her heart than anger—still survives the wreck of her early hopes.

“Her unhappy story is no secret. Insulted in

her pride, wounded in her tenderness, she quitted Lord Edward publicly ; and this circumstance of publicity is supposed by many to operate on her mind against a reconciliation, sought for by an apparently repentant husband, and urged by her brother with all the perseverance of affection. It has been thought that having braved public opinion by a hazardous step, for which she assigned no other than general reasons, (honour and pride forbidding her to say more,) she now feels reluctant to authorize a presumption of error or injustice on her part, by reclaiming the protection of the husband whom she had voluntarily quitted. But it is not so ; her moral courage is equal to the softness of her heart ; she still loves, she even forgives him. But there are circumstances in this melancholy story with which the public cannot be made acquainted, and which render the idea of returning to the home of this wild and gloomy man fearful to her. Thus is the mystery of the hermitage-scene explained, and the supposed pleadings of a seducer converted into the heartfelt reasoning of sincere affection.

“ I have yet another act of justice to perform, one from which I feel that I ought not to shrink,

however fatal such frankness may be to my hopes. Dudley has never ceased to love your niece ; his heart has never been unfaithful ; false views, false ideas, a mind hedged in with prejudices,—but no levity, no change.

“ I cannot say more,—judge what it must cost me to say thus much. In justifying Mr. Dudley, I sign, perhaps, the death-warrant of my own hopes, and that too at the very moment of their promised completion ; but the feeling of honour has made itself heard even above that of love. I would not owe even Janet’s heart,—the richest of all earth’s treasures !—to an act of duplicity. How indeed could I enjoy such a possession while hourly shamed by its purity ?

“ I do not—I could not know Mr. Dudley ; but I have secure assurance of the truth of all that I have said in his favour. Your niece will judge between us ; but her decision must be free as air, without the influence of word or implied wish. I will owe nothing but to her heart ; should it reject me, the world with all its illusions will be to me a desert, where neither voice of joy gladdens the heart, or dew of heaven fosters it into freshness.

“ Claim, I acknowledge, I have none, for there

can be nothing binding in a promise yielded under the influence of a false impression; that which Miss Hamilton was prevailed upon to accord me is annulled. I resign it with a feeling which her decision can exalt to rapture, or lower to despair."

I shall not dwell upon the sentiment of admiration which this letter called forth, or the tears which interrupted its perusal. It was true that De Murville had committed an error, but how frankly it had been avowed, how splendidly atoned for. Janet, as she read it, almost wished that she had never known Dudley; but now nothing could dissever that first knot. It was more than possible that she might never see him again; but she knew that though greatly faulty, he had not been false, and that virtue no longer forbade her to dwell upon the past. And yet she felt that De Murville's beautiful disregard of all self-interest had raised him far above a rival, who had lowered his fine mind and bowed his heart—while all its rich and generous feelings were obviously rebelling—in humble abeyance to the decisions of a tribunal which he internally despised.

There were, as I have already said, tears and praises, gratitude and regrets, deep and real—both

felt and expressed ; and tenderness that dared not show itself, lest it should be mistaken for compassion,—in general an offensive expression of feeling, unless it may dare to be open in its sympathy. There was all this, and more ; but nothing of that sentiment which De Murville sought to inspire,—no answer to the question of his heart.

It was now the month of July, and the army of Algiers was in its full career of glory. De Murville embarked on board a vessel ready to sail from Toulon, and joined it as a volunteer. He went with his gallant spirit and his desolated heart to the new crusade, the wild warfare of the desert ; and Janet returned with her aunt to the still streets and summer solitude of Paris.

—XI.—

It is long since we have known any thing but by hearsay of Dudley, and now he is no longer the Dudley of other times,—“ th’ expectancy and rose” of ladies’ hopes, the mirror in which fashion glassed itself ; but a melancholy man, journeying on to Hyeres, with that poor sister whose heart sorrow

had almost broken, and who was now upon her way to try what the gentle influence of a southern sun could do to heal the sickness of the soul,—that mining malady which neither “poppy, nor mandragora, nor all the drowsy syrups of the East” can cure.

Dudley had erred deeply ; but if repentance may be allowed to redeem an error, his might be thought atoned for. He had found a new heart in a pure and beautiful setting, had coveted and gained it, and then left it to wither in loneliness, or be won by another ; while he himself found out, too late, that all the adornments of life, all the blandishments of love and hope, all the delights of intercourse with a responding spirit, had staid behind with it.

When Dudley first found his steps bending daily, and almost mechanically, to R—— Street, he was far from imagining that he was fast involving himself in the difficulties of a serious attachment. It was so long since any thing had really interested him, that the delight of a new sensation, the charm of fresh excitement, was to him like the philosopher’s stone, transmuting every thing that came within its contact into pure gold. At first, there were moments when something like reflection would force itself upon him, but they were few and distant ;

and latterly, to pass the day in the heaven of Janet's presence, and to go it over again minute by minute during the hours of inevitable absence, was all the account he made of time. Every morning he rose with the expectation of seeing her whose image had brightened his dreams, and every evening he said " Good night," with the hope of such another morrow.

I know not how long this might have lasted, had not the day at Roehampton opened his eyes. That day Janet was so beautiful! her beauty was so much in harmony with the simplicity of nature! In town, she was less detached from the surrounding objects,—her dress, her occupations, her habits, approached her more to other people; but while she sat under the shade of the old apple-tree, with two large green leaves stuck horizontally into the front of her hair, and arranged as a sun-shade by a little girl who had begged to wear her bonnet " just for two minutes," she looked as if she belonged to the flowers that blossomed round her,—as if she was their queen, chief lily of the tribe, who had never been lighted to bed but by the lamp of the glow-worm.

And then the mind that looked out from her

beautiful eyes, and the pure and natural heart ! At once he felt the danger and the dishonour of his position, felt that he loved as he had never done before,—passionately, exclusively ; and saw, through the maidenly reserve of her who had inspired this deep and absorbing feeling, that she was not indifferent to its silent eloquence.

I will not try to detail the conflicts of opposing feelings that followed the sudden retrospect into which his mind had been forced, the hard-fought battles between growing love and ingrained prejudice. In a lighter mood he might perhaps have temporized with what the world calls morality ; but he felt that, in his present situation, whatever was not tenaciously honourable, would be utterly unprincipled ; that there should be no sale-shop in the mind for indulgencies, but a vigorous rooting up at once, and with both hands, not only of the flowers which beauty, innocence, the charm of feeling, and the grace of mental refinement had sown in his breast, but of the buds which were just blowing out in hers.

Janet was honourably born, virtuously educated, and with a mind formed, like her person, in all the prodigality of nature. But then her family, though

ancient, was worn out and forgotten ; her position in life obscure, and might be misrepresented, or guessed at unfavourably. The *world* would inquire, “ Who is she ? ” and would answer its own question loweringly, perhaps with malevolence ; and then the sneers, and the scorn, and the vengeance, contemptible though not contemned, of those whose palpable advances he had slighted, and the jeers and triumph of his particular friends, whose projected conquests he had sometimes—in pure badinage—anticipated. In short, an army of giants, whom one breath of reason would have reduced to their true pigmy proportions, stood up round him, brandishing their wooden swords, and closing in all the avenues of better feeling.

It is impossible to excuse Dudley,—almost impossible to imagine how a fine-minded, high-spirited man should find such paltry obstacles imposing ; probably the force of early impressions, of education, the influence of habitual society,—in short, those who have been placed in the same situation will perhaps understand it, and those who have not—— But there are doubtless few, who at some moment of their lives have not felt how much heavier than a chain of lead may be one of feathers.

To part from Janet was agony to Dudley; but to have farther involved her happiness would have been base. His own danger, too, became every hour more imminent. He felt this, and fled,—but the arrow was in his heart; he threw himself into dissipation, proved its inefficiency, and drew back disgusted.

It was in vain that his fashion, his figure, his talents, were praised at Vienna by those whose smiles were fame; in vain that at Dresden fair eyes spoke fairer things to his dulled vision, or that paler stars sunk into total eclipse when he produced his melancholy figure at the court of Turin. Nothing would do; bright beauties showed themselves, and soft ones suffered themselves to be seen, but he neither looked at the one or the other. In short, when the heart is *sincerely* preoccupied, it is vain to expend ammunition on it; it is but sowing corn on a grave-stone. When the young leaves of the oak bud out, they push off those which have remained from a former summer; but then the old ones are withered, and fall because they have no adhesion.

He continued to travel,—but not to courts; he was angry with their cold ceremonials, impatient

of their pageants; found their most admired ornaments insipid, and believed them false—in short he was unjust, because he was unhappy. “Such women as these, (he would say, as the beauties of the night floated before him,) would disdain to modify their graces into the softer charm of household loveliness. Their minds are like the splendid palaces of Italian architecture, sumptuous façades, gay vestibules; a bright display of all that is most effective in art; gold, velvet, gorgeousness; but no home corner, no precious unexhibited spot where the tired spirit might repose in the luxury of uncalculating ease, or the sweet intercourse of domestic affection.” Meanwhile, absence—the common cure—served but to strengthen the disease. The more Dudley saw of other women, the more did Janet’s image brighten on his memory, until the admiration which he hoped might have been weakened by other admirations, began gradually to take the shape of that deep and enduring sentiment, over which the accidents of life have no further power.

And long before the year of self-prescribed exile had passed away, Dudley had ceased to think of what he had been accustomed to call the

convenances, and felt that life without Janet was but a bleak and colourless void, in which there was no home for heart or hope. A virtuous passion is a powerful refiner of the mind; it filled his soul, and purified it from the dross which had alloyed its brightness. All the high qualities of his nature, all the warm feelings of his heart, were awakened; he had risen above the prejudices that had impeded his happiness, he had stripped them of their flimsy investments, and looked at them wondering to think how things of such small worth could even for a moment have retained his mind in their subjection. Not that in shaking off the influence of prejudice he became the contemner of established opinion; on the contrary, he readily acknowledged its salutary influence, which so often opposes a barrier against rash, disgraceful, or ill-assorted marriages, inconsiderately formed and, in general, eternally repented. But here was every thing but fashion, for fortune Dudley neither wanted nor thought of. His own was noble, and he had long discovered that increase of wealth may sometimes be paid for in metal more precious than even gold itself: it was a choice approved by virtue, honourable to taste, and prodigal in promise

of happiness, with nothing against it but the verdict of the jury in the *west*.

Dudley was now a changed man in every thing but his passion, and it would have been easier to have involved the gravest and most reflecting of mankind in the net from which he had just disengaged himself, than that he should have been again entangled in its snare. With a new heart, and yet an unchanged one, he journeyed homewards, passing along the beautiful shores of the Mediterranean, grand, and lone, and eastern in their loveliness, and through the vineyards and olive-groves of France, to a village in the Bourbonnais, where he was seized with an attack of fever that at first menaced danger, and long resisted the means employed to subdue it. It seemed probable that he had caught it from a poor traveller who had dropped down on the road while asking alms of him, and whom he had supported to a place of shelter. This circumstance changed the whole course of events; instead of arriving in London much within the year, he did not reach it till after Mrs. Brudenel's departure for the continent, and thus the moment of elucidation seemed lost for ever.

An hour after his arrival, he was on his way to

R—— Street. As he walked along, a crowd of doubts, of fears that had never before disturbed him, assailed his mind. In so many months how much might have happened ! It is a fearful thing to return home after a long absence, thinking of the voices that bade farewell, and the eyes that looked it, and scarcely daring to ask one's hopes if they will be there to give the long estranged a welcome.

Dudley felt this, and fearfully. When he stood at the top of the street, he looked down through it ; his eye rested on Mrs. Brudenel's balcony,—there were no flowers there. This trivial circumstance disturbed him. As he advanced, he saw two women who begged, under the pretext of selling matches, sitting on the step of the door, as if the house was unoccupied,—his alarm increased ; he approached nearer, and the white paper on the windows at once put an end to a hope, which an hour before had seemed a certainty.

He knocked at the door, and a young woman who was at work in the parlour-window opened it to answer him, but she knew nothing of Mrs. Brudenel ; she was not her servant, but only there to look after the house ; all that she could tell was

that Mrs. Brudenel was gone to France, and that the terms on which it was to be let had been left with Mr. Timson the upholsterer, who would give the gentleman further particulars. Dudley asked to see the house, and had again the happiness,—if under such circumstances it could be called one,—of sitting on the chair next to that which Janet used to occupy, and the grief of seeing hers vacant.

How powerful are local associations ! An object remembered,—not from its own interest, but merely from its having been at a particular period habitually familiar to the eye,—becomes a key to the passions. The slightest, the most careless notices can unlock the springs of hope, dread, grief, regret, rapture ; we listen with wonder to the story of the Arabian necromancer who, breathing on the earth which he holds within his palm, scatters it on the ground, and sees a marble city filled with life rise up from a few grains of sand ; but the familiar miracle of memory, whose spell is some common sound, some every-day image, passes unmarvelled at, though not less wonderful than the magician's dust. The natural magic of the mind is like the mirror of that noted enchanter Cornelius Agrippa,

which revealed to the accomplished Surrey the gracious form of the lady of his love,—the courtly Geraldine; so did the little table, at which Janet usually worked or drew, recall her charming figure, her habitual attitude, the turn of her gracefully-placed head, and all the loved, endeared minutiae of look and accent to the mind of Dudley; and while he stood upon a spot filled with the apparition of her beauty, the echo of her voice, it seemed to him as if the deep devotion with which he had worshipped her in absence were coldness compared with the entire and perfect love which at that moment filled his soul. The past was again the present. “It seems but yesterday,” he said; and then sinking backwards in his chair, added in a tone of self-reproval, “and yet I left her!”

“Would you please to see the other rooms, sir?” said his conductress, twirling her key impatiently, as if to remind him that she had something else to do than to stand waiting on his fancies.

“Not at present,” he said, starting from his reverie; “another time.” And then putting four times as much into her hand as she expected, was down stairs before she had performed her curtsy.

Dudley passed but three days in England,—

three inevitable days, that seemed to him to count their hours by ages, and then crossed over to Calais, having assured himself that Mrs. Brudenel was still in the French capital. He embarked on a moonlight evening, when the cry of the curlew was heard along the shore, and the line of the French coast seemed traced in blue and luminous vapour; and as he sat alone, looking from the side of the vessel forward to that coast which no longer seemed to him the boundary of a foreign land, things unspeakable passed through his mind, possessing it with sweet and ineffable melancholy. Assuredly the soul must have a language which the lips cannot utter! We may speak it, perhaps, in another world, where the feelings, which are too fleeting and visionary to be concentrated into thought or expressed by words, but which, like a steam of subtle and commingled perfume, steal in through every crevice of the mind, may find their organ.

—XII.—

Dudley arrived at Paris on the evening of Madame d'Auberville's ball, passed her illumi-

nated porch without noticing either flambeaux or gens d'armes, stopped at the Hôtel de —, where he had been accustomed to lodge, and as he ascended the stairs was recognised by an old friend, who insisted on taking him to the countess's fête, where he would be sure to meet with some charming *compatriotes*. Dudley had just begun to frame an excuse, when the last word tingled on his ear, and produced a sudden and eager acquiescence. Indeed so sudden a one, that had not his friend been just at that moment seriously engaged in subduing a rebellious curl, it might have exposed him to no small share of raillery, a thing often more distressing even than reproof.

The little viscount, who was not a quadrille figure, and left (as he said) waltzing to attachés, and the *galop* to Hungarian magnates, stood, when Dudley entered, in the environs of a doorway in the full exercise of courtesy and vituperation. Dudley's name was already known to D'Auberville, who received him as one enjoying the reputation of a distinguished exclusive is sure to be received by all ball-giving people, be they the best, the plainest, or even the wisest in the world. Many ladies passed, and all had a honied word, or a piquant

à propos, from the junior master of the revels, who did not forget the *aparté* to his friend when they were out of hearing. All were spelt backwards; the fair were insipid, the dark fierce, the lively bold, the modest dull; one was spoilt by her ear, another by her chin. Mdlle. Vongutchen, the Flemish heiress, with the family ruby on her forehead, was a glow-worm,—all reptile but the gem; Madame de Clauzel Castri enamel on brass, like the Venus of an old-fashioned watch-case. The charming Honorine de Bar, missing *her prince*, had put on *le deuil de violet* even to the very colour of her lips; and seeing La Baronne Minden, he exclaimed,—

“Ah, gentle lover of forest glades! Sweet lady! only to be caught, like a green turtle, when the wind is still and the moon shining!”

“But,” (said Dudley, interrupting an impromptu on symmetry,) “beauty is not like faith; its strength is not in its perfectness.”

“True,” returned the viscount. “Madame D——’s African nose does not stand in the way of her conquests; and Du Bellay admires la jolie Lucille all the more for the protuberance on her right shoulder. He says there cannot be too much of so charming a creature; but my taste is more

within bounds ; it does not exuberate beyond the more limited outline of the Duchess de B——, or your charming Lady R——, who looks at this moment like a blue and silver dream with a star on its forehead ; though Chavarney, who chose his wife as the conclave does the Pope,—for her air of caducity, says she is not angular enough to be intellectual. But talking of charms, there is a creature here to-night,—(Dudley’s heart beat)—such a bird of beauty, such a queen-bee,—a very Oreade, one that might cross your path in a twilight forest,—for you are poetical, and doubtless favoured by the wood nymphs,—or sing you into paradise on a green bank by moonlight.”

“ A married phœnix ? ”

“ Heaven forefend ! No, no ; free, unrivetted, unappropriated ; with a delicious disdain of mankind, and a maidenly blush when affronted by flimsy compliments. Even I am her slave, I who have honoured millinery all my life, seeing the miracles it can work. But here she comes.

‘ Now on my life
A beauteous lady, fair of nature’s gift,
And fairer still for being chastely set
In the bright circle of her purity.’ ”

At that moment the cold salute already men-

tioned passed between Dudley and Janet; and the viscount, starting up would have followed his Oreade to the seat to which her partner was leading her, when a tap on the shoulder obliged him to turn the other way.

Dudley watched from a distance Janet's movements. He saw her followed, admired, the divinity of the night; but natural and unconscious as in the obscurity of R—— Street. He would have approached, have spoken to her; but something in their respective situations, and perhaps her reserved manner, deterred him. He advanced towards Mrs. Brudenel; but the extreme coldness with which she returned his salute, rendered it impossible for him to address her without appearing intrusive, perhaps impertinent.

There was much in his conduct that required excuse. Of this he was painfully aware, but felt that a ball-room was not the fitting place for explanation. Besides, the position in which he now found Janet was so different from the one in which he had previously seen her: then she was like a pearl still enclosed within its shell, whose worth was only known to its first discoverer; no other eye had looked upon its beauty, no other voice

appreciated its lustre. But now she was a crown jewel, and to precipitate matters might have seemed like a movement of vanity, an effort to appropriate a gem whose value had risen on the favourable judgment of others.

In short, the proud, vain-glorious Dudley was humbled into caution. He wrote to Mrs. Brudenel, adopting the form prescribed by mere acquaintance, and requesting to be allowed to call upon her. The note was taken to another lady in the same hotel, (a mistake of frequent occurrence,) who threw it into the fire. Dudley drew a bad omen from Mrs. Brudenel's silence; but determining to present himself at her door, arrived before it at the same moment with the Count de Murville. The latter entered with the authorized air of a person enjoying the privileges of intimacy; and Dudley, feeling that the moment was not a favourable one for his first appearance, withdrew.

That evening he went to the Italian Opera. Janet was not there; but on descending the staircase, he saw Mrs. Brudenel immediately before him. She was with the Countess d'Auberville, and as she passed, several persons addressed her in a tone of felicitation. Dudley drew nearer. The

approaching marriage of Miss Hamilton was spoken of; aware of his vicinity, Mrs. Brudenel received the congratulations of her acquaintances as if there had been cause for them. It was before Janet had been consulted on the subject of the count's addresses, and while her aunt indulged the most sanguine hope of their being accepted; besides, the opportunity of mortifying Dudley was not to be resisted, and she certainly used her power to its utmost extent.

Dudley had heard all. Hope in the human heart,—at least in the young heart,—is like the blossom in the paradise of Du Bartas, where—

“ *Les fleurs étoilées*
Vives, sautillent plus, plus elles sont foulées.”

But in his, the elastic power was lost, the springs relaxed and incapable of action; and the dreams, credulously accepted, sanguinely cherished, seemed as he listened to fall into a shapeless heap, like the card-built castle of a child when a sudden breath blows upon it.

He would have quitted Paris instantly, but that his sister, whom he fondly loved, was on her way to meet him there; and in her delicate and most

forlorn situation, to have withdrawn from her the only protection of which she could honourably avail herself, would have been inhuman. But he could not endure to remain in a place where he was every moment exposed to the chance of meeting her, who though no longer an object of hope, was more than ever one of profound and unextinguishable tenderness; and still worse misery,—to see with her the happy, the accepted lover, whose pride, more nobly set than Dudley's vanity, had placed its glory in possessing the rich treasure of her pure and beautiful heart.

He went into the near country, and looking about for a lonely spot, found it in the forest of Montmorency, where he remained for some time without knowing that she whom he loved and shunned lived on the edge of the same forest, in the white cottage under the chesnut-trees, which he had so often passed in his moonlight rambles. At length he learned it; and having at the same time ascertained that the Count de Murville visited there daily, and that his marriage with Janet was to take place in a few weeks, he went out again from his solitude.

About this time, a last attempt which Dudley had made to reconcile his unfortunate sister to her

husband utterly failed, and he now proposed that they should travel southwards. Nature, he thought, might be more merciful to her than man, and the scenery and climate of the south he hoped might amuse her mind, and perhaps arrest the progress of the melancholy malady with which she now seemed unhappily affected.

They journeyed on,—he with a vacillating but often buoyant hope, she with a sadder certainty. His tender and sanguine nature dwelt earnestly on the belief, that one so young must have the germ of existence too strong within her, to be crushed out of life by unkindness. He had forgotten that it is with fulness the heart bursts; and that as years advance, the swelling tide of passions subsides within its boundaries, and all that yet remains within the breast finds room.

The change of scene did nothing, and the air of the south, on which Dudley had so fondly counted, nothing either. Is there on earth a task so heart-rending as that of watching the slow decay of nature in a being whom we tenderly love? to see the dear pale face dressing itself in smiles to cheat the eye of affection? to hear the languid voice faintly uttering the last expressions of gratitude or

fondness? to behold youth going down into the tomb with all its withered hopes and broken illusions,—the warm and faithful heart mouldering into dust, and the once-praised features sunk and discoloured? There are other griefs sharp and excruciating, but this one mocks them all!

Many a lonely night did Dudley sit by the bedside of his sister, when all stood still but time and death, counting the ticking of the clock lest the hour for administering the draught, in which none but himself had hope, should pass unheeded, and watching the lingering but sure progress of the terrible enemy whose visible presence his heart tried to deny, though his reason fearfully and tremblingly acknowledged it.

All Hyeres talked with pity of the poor English lady, so young and so fair, who had come there—as it was thought—to rest for ever; and of the brother who watched her with such love, and who would not suffer that another than himself should help or serve her, whose eyes seemed to have no other office but to gaze upon her face and mark its hectic changes, and who looked himself as if, when she was gone, he would not linger long behind. Every one who passed by the low fence of their

cottage-garden, and saw him supporting her faint steps reduced again to the feebleness of infancy, or drawing the chair in which he had carefully placed her along the sunniest path in the vineyard, gave them a kind wish or a blessing, and sometimes a tear with it. Even the physician, schooled as he was to such scenes, turned away from his anxious quivering smile when Dudley said tremblingly, "One does not die with such a beautiful red in the cheeks. O no; we are sure of that," and then paused, as if to catch the confirmation of his haggard hope.

But that fair and sorrowful creature sleeps at last! The broken heart is still, the complaint of abused affection silent, and he who watched beside her, now sheds bitter tears upon her foreign grave, where he alone is mourner.

"It is of such that heaven makes angels!" said Dudley, as he looked upon it; "and I who have lost her must make this my consolation. Farewell, my Emily! dear sister and sole friend, farewell for ever! On this side heaven we shall meet no more; but your spirit will hover over me, that spirit sustained and purified by faith and sorrow, and now made company for angels."

Some children came to gather blossoms from a

bush that grew beside the grave: the fresh leaves fell from their hands upon it. Dudley knelt down and kissed the stone upon which the name and age of her who slept beneath it, were inscribed, and then with an uncertain hand traced these words:—

“She too was gathered in her beauty, and her sweetness is scattered like the leaves of the desert.”

The children drew back a few steps, with that instinctive feeling of respect with which affliction inspires even infancy; and Dudley, again pressing his lips to the stone, repeated in a tremulous voice, “Farewell for the last time, my sister! Your brother leaves you here in loneliness,—loved and lamented one!” and then rising up from the grave, retraced his steps to his desolate dwelling.

As he departed, the children gathered round the grave to read what the stranger had written; but it was in a language unknown to them, and they looked but they could not understand it. But they understood his sorrow, and she who seemed the eldest, knelt upon the turf, and repeated the prayer which she had been taught to say over the grave of her mother.

—XIII.—

It was the 29th of July, and there was fighting in the streets of Paris, and cannon in its thronged places, and the dead lay heaped about just as the bullets and the balls had left them, and good people, who feared not to practise charity in the midst of death and danger, opened their doors to the wounded and the dying, nothing terrified by the appalling aspects—gashed and grim—of the victims. It was in the evening, a little before sunset, that a woman who had been thrown down and wounded in the trample, was taken into a house in the Faubourg St. Honoré, where she was placed upon a bed and left to the care of the charitable inhabitants of an apartment on the Rez de Chaussée. Soon after, a young man was brought into the same house in an almost lifeless state, from a blow given with the butt end of a musket.

As he was borne through the room where the woman lay, he opened his eyes languidly, looked towards her, but closed them again immediately, as if life was extinct. The bearers laid him on a couch in an adjoining chamber, and then left

him to the care of a surgeon, whom humanity had detained upon the spot.

It was long before the efforts of the latter were successful, but at length life seemed to return slowly; a fluttering pulse, a little colour in the lips, a low interrupted breathing gave hope that the danger was less imminent than the surgeon had at first apprehended it to be. Another hour elapsed, and the young man, who had been during that time gradually reviving, opened his eyes, and looking round with a confused stare, fixed them on the door which communicated with the outward chamber, and which had been left half open for the sake of air. On a bed within that room was placed the woman who had been wounded, and beside her knelt another female, who appeared busied in fastening a bandage round the forehead of the one who lay, as it seemed, dying. It was evening,—almost night, so that the chamber, in which there was as yet no lamp, was but imperfectly lighted.

“Who is that woman?” said the young man, awakening as if from a dream. “Why does she kneel there,—always in the same spot?”

The surgeon, dreading excitement, closed the

door gently, and the young man sunk again into a troubled sleep.

As night advanced the fever diminished; he breathed more freely, and his sleep became calm. The surgeon felt his pulse, found it softer and less wavering: and having many dependant on his care, left a person to watch by his bedside, and went to look after his other patients. The night, as many must remember, was more than usually sultry even for the season, and the person who watched, oppressed by heat, opened the door between the two chambers: there was no noise, the same figure lay upon the bed, and the other woman sat beside it.

Soon after the young man awoke, complaining of thirst; and while the attendant gave him some cooling beverage, his eyes again wandered to the half-open door.

“Still there!” he exclaimed, “always that woman! Years ago she was there—in the same spot. It was evening then; I put her in the grave myself—now the lamps burn, and still she is there. Who is she?”

The attendant did as the surgeon had done before,—closed the door gently, and the young man fell asleep.

As the night waned, noises were heard in the adjoining chamber, and voices as of persons in prayer, and now and then a sound of weeping, and last of all, silence as of death. But the young man heard nothing, for he slept profoundly until a late hour the next day; and when the surgeon came, his pulse was quiet, and no ill effect remained from the blow which he had received, except a sense of extreme weakness. His mind was now perfectly collected, and he inquired anxiously where he was, and how it came that he found himself in a room the aspect of which was strange to him.

The surgeon explained the circumstance of his having received a blow, and being left in a senseless state on the pavement until succoured by the benevolent persons under whose roof he then was. The stranger expressed a deep sense of the kindness he had received, and then called to mind that having arrived at Paris on the 29th, he had thoughtlessly ventured into the streets, had got involved in the crowd, seen the gens d'armes advance, and had then probably received the blow, as he had no farther recollection of what had passed.

“But,” continued he, “last night I thought that there were people here, and that I saw a woman

who knelt beside another who was dying; but afterwards, it seemed to me as if both were figures on a tombstone. But I am come," he added in a tone of profound feeling, "from the death-bed and the grave, and my mind is full of sad and gloomy fancies."

"In the present instance," replied the surgeon, "fancy has had nothing to do: what you speak of, really existed. In that chamber," he added, pointing to the closed door, "a young woman died last night. She had been benevolently employed in assisting an unfortunate person who lay wounded within the porch of the hotel immediately opposite, and in crossing the street was run down by a horseman and received a hurt, the consequences of which proved fatal."

"She died, you say," exclaimed the young man, painfully agitated, "and she who watched beside her?"

"Was an inhabitant of this house, who appears to have had some knowledge of the deceased, though she was brought here entirely by accident. As it is impossible in the present confusion to have the corpse carried to a place of interment, the proprietor of the garden beneath your window has allowed

that it should be deposited there for the present, and this evening it will be laid in the spot where you may now, if you will raise yourself a little, see the newly turned-up earth." Then, without appearing to notice the agitation of his patient, he added, "The lady, in whose apartment you are, has been often at your door this morning to make inquiries, but would not enter as you slept. This evening, if you continue improving as you have done for the last few hours, you may perhaps (after the melancholy ceremony is over) find yourself strong enough to receive her friendly visit."

The young man expressed an earnest desire to do so, and the surgeon seeing that his immediate assistance was no longer necessary, took his leave.

The stranger raised himself upon his couch, which was placed close to the window, and looked out upon the garden and the new-made grave. It was a melancholy garden, such a one as may still be sometimes met with even in the populous quarters of Paris; partly enclosed by a long dull line of building, and partly by a wall of disproportioned height tapestried with dark ivy. The grass was long and foul, the paths choked with weeds and obstructed with brambles; here and there was a

bud, or a berry, or a flower, that had outlived neglect, or a mutilated statue that had yielded to it. Few things can look more desolate than a mutilated statue, when the features have escaped by chance and still retain their original expression. In the middle of this weed-grown garden, was a fountain without water,—a large paved basin fringed with melancholy nettles and still more melancholy trees, leafless even in summer, with two useless lions couched under a dark arch; and above, two loving deities smiling tenderly and looking woingly upon each other, while their fractured limbs lay scattered about, and the evening air moaned dolefully through their shattered bodies. A cold moonlight would have made spectres of them.

It was a lonely scene, and as evening darkened on, it became a gloomy one. There is always something forbidding in the contrast of past splendour and present degradation. The silence of a primeval forest, into whose depths the axe has not yet worked its way, where green birds and scarlet hang from the branches, balancing their suspended bodies in the pleasant apathy of certain safety, while others with small fly-like forms, feathered as it were with

fire, shoot between the boughs like wandering stars, has still the virgin grandeur of a fresh creation unmixed with meaner images upon it. The loneliness of the desert, the solitude of the sea-shore, people the mind with fancies; “millions of spiritual creatures walk abroad;” we hold communion with angels,—with the dead whom we have loved on earth, and the absent to whom our hearts are faithful. But this was town desolation, a vestige of artificial splendour trampled into meanness,—all but the hasty and unblest grave! *That* worked upon the mind’s magic, and the young man gazed upon it until his eyes grew dim, and he could look no longer.

Suddenly, a coming and going in the adjoining chamber, and a noise as if of feet slipping under a heavy weight, roused him from his deep abstraction. He looked from his window; it was but a few steps above the level of the garden, but the grave was at the far-off side, and under a large tree whose boughs obscured all but the earth beneath it. Presently, the gate opened, and two men appeared bearing a coffin, hastily put together of a few ill-assorted boards, and covered with a white linen cloth; two

women followed closely veiled, and enveloped in dark mantles that entirely concealed their forms. It was now dusk ; the women approached the grave, and kneeling down beside it, one of them read from a book, while the bearers, having lowered the coffin two or three feet below the surface of the earth, stood uncovered beside it.

The women continued on their knees some minutes, and then both rising, strewed flowers, which they appeared to have brought with them for the purpose, on the lid of the coffin ; and the bearers having covered it with earth, all returned as they had entered, the women gliding behind the shadow of the trees, and holding their handkerchiefs to their eyes as if deeply affected. A strange shuddering came over the young man, a thought that made his heart sink and his knees knock together.

“ How is it with you, sir ? ” inquired the surgeon, who at that moment opened the door ; “ not the better, I fear, for the gloomy scene you have just witnessed.”

“ For the love of heaven, sir,” said the stranger, without heeding his question, “ tell me who it was !

I think I know the person who walked at this side. Who was it, I entreat you, they have just now buried in that grave?"

The surgeon looked surprised, but he was a calm man, and accustomed to witness every variety of feverish excitement.

"Who was it?" repeated the stranger impatiently.

"One," replied the surgeon, "of whom you could have known nothing."

The young man took both his hands, and wringing them within his own, said, in a deep struggling voice, "I would give all that I possess on earth to make that sure."

"I know not what your interest may be," interrupted the surgeon calmly, but with feeling; "but I hope and believe, that you are mistaken. The person whom you saw committed to the earth was—"

"A stranger?"

"No; a sister of charity, one from the neighbourhood of St. Denis. She had been going about all the morning amongst the wounded, and met her death in the courageous performance of her duties."

—XIV.—

Poor Sister Mathurine! need I say that it was over her sorrows the grave had closed, and that it was Janet who had knelt and prayed beside her? And the young man,—already have those who have patiently followed his story pronounced the name of Dudley. Yes, it was Dudley, and the apartment into which he had been borne was Mrs. Brudenel's. From the position of the two females at the grave, the one who knelt nearest to him, entirely obscured the figure of her companion; in that one he believed that he traced the form of Mrs. Brudenel. It was indeed herself; but the young woman who died in the night, she for whom the grave had just opened, the ministering angel whose last act was one of mercy, who was she? There was his doubt—his terrible dread.

Need I say more? I think not. It would be useless to describe—because all will understand it—the feeling with which Dudley awaited the surgeon's answer, when he questioned him as to the name which the younger lady bore, or the ecstasy of joy with which he heard her maiden one,—the dear, the familiar,—the one written in his heart, pro-

nounced. Then came the meeting, and the explanation, and self-upbraidings, and pardon, and hope, and last of all,—certainty.

They are married,—with all the promise of enduring happiness which affection tried in the crucible, an entire confidence in each other's love, and a heartfelt pride in each other's excellencies, can give.

“What a magnificent pair they are!” exclaimed Mrs. Brudenel in the delight of her heart, as they returned from the ceremony. “It is downright joy to gaze at them.”

“Such looks presage happiness,” said the Count d'Auberville, who as the friend of Janet's father gave her away; “may they—and my foresight tells me that they will—be prophetic. And as a note of good augury,” he added in a low voice to Mrs. Brudenel, “I have had news of De Murville. I know how you have suffered for him; but your heart may be at rest. He has returned in safety and with honour,—time, we hope, will do the rest.”

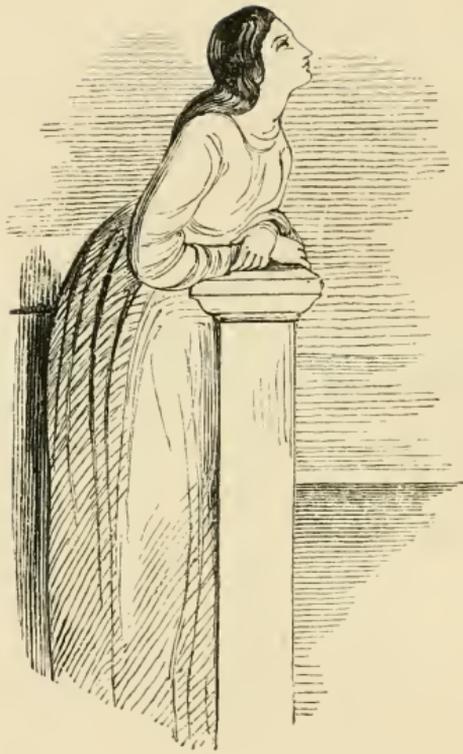
“Time and my example,” cried the little vis-

count, who had caught the last word, and who—always declaring himself the most miserable of men—assisted at the nuptial ceremony, wrote the epithalamium; and taking his desolation to an ambassador's ball, kneaded it into a madrigal to excite the sympathy of a new goddess, the tip of whose nose he had just discovered to be modelled after the true Cleopatra pattern.



THE

STORY OF FIAMMETTA.



THE STORY OF FIAMMETTA.



My mind misgives :
Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels.

Shakspeare.

——THE girl sat upon a stone by the road-side, just at the entrance of the town of Mayence; and as passengers crossed the bridge, she asked alms of them in a soft low voice, and with an accent which seemed to belong to another country, looking boldly but not immodestly in their faces, with the expression of one noble by nature, but made importunate by want or evil association. Few noticed her, and of those who did, some jeered, and others reproved her as an idle baggage, who loved begging better than work; asking her how many mothers she had at home lying ill of the fever, or whether it was off of the roof or into the fire that her father

had tumbled. To which unfeeling jesting she made no answer; but turning away sorrowfully, drew the hood of her tattered cloak still closer over her face, down which tears stole silently, and seemed as if afraid to repeat her doleful petition.

One alone appeared touched by her pale cheek, and the speaking wretchedness of her torn garments which hung in shreds upon her: it was a widow of humble rank, with an infant in her arms. She thought, perhaps, of what might one day befall her own child,—a mother's heart is always compassionate,—and as she approached the girl, I approached also to listen to her story.

She had come (she said) from the mountains of Carpathia with a troop of Zingaras, who had stolen her from her parents when she was an infant. Of those parents she knew no more than that they were travellers of seeming note, who had been way-laid in a forest: none had ever spoken to her of their after fate. But there was in the gang a woman who had nursed and loved, and been a mother to her; this woman had a husband, upon whom some heavy distress had fallen, and he, to save her from the miseries of want, had robbed. It was his first crime,—hunger had driven him to it:

he was discovered, tried, and condemned to a long and unshared imprisonment.

Immured within the dungeons of Buda, in darkness and in solitude, he gave himself up to despair; but his wife still hoped with all the fond tenacity of woman's love; and she went daily to the gate of the prison, and stood before it, and looked upon its walls, and thought—and prayed inwardly.

At last help was given her, and she freed him from his bondage. They fled together to the mountains, and as they sat one day steeping their last crust in the water of the way-side pool, the Zingaras fell in with them, gave them shelter, and made them of their band. The man took to their ways, and became fierce and lawless, but the woman (who was called Naomi) remembered God; and having lost her own baby, took the poor infant of the way-laid parents to her bosom, and was as a mother to her; and as she grew into childhood and understanding, kept her always near to herself, hiding her—as it were—from the rest of the crew, and teaching her the Christian prayers, which had perhaps never before been heard in their wild solitudes.

And thus they lived, from year to year; some-

times encamped in lonely forests, or hidden in the caverns of the rocks; sometimes divided into small bands and hanging about the suburbs of cities, or subsisting on the credulity of the simple people of the hamlets, making their way through many countries, but their home in none. It was in one of their wanderings, that as they journeyed by the moonshine from the Black Forest towards the countries of the Rhine, the good Naomi fell ill; and the band, forced to continue their march, left her in a hut by the way-side, with only the poor girl to nurse and watch her; and there she had died, and some peasants of the Bergstrasse had buried her. The girl had then fallen ill,—of grief, she said, and tears gushed from her eyes in streams while she told of it,—but she was better now; and having none to help her was begging her way to Cologne where she expected to meet the Zingaras, who were the only human beings she knew, or had any claim upon.

The story was told in a simple way, without trick or whine; it was obviously not the gabbled tale of a practised beggar, and while she fixed her wild bright eyes in the woman's face, beseeching her pity by a look of feverish earnestness, I found

mine grow misty, and my hand glide mechanically into my pocket.

She was as pretty as so sick and wan a thing could be, with a melancholy maturity in her eyes, strangely at variance with the childish, even infantine expression, that lurked about the corners of her beautiful mouth. I gave her money, but the woman did much more,—she offered her an asylum; and having asked her age, and learned that it was eight or thereabouts,—as well as her mother Naomi could guess, she added with the quick consideration which a kind heart furnishes, “My poor child, you must think no more of the Zingaras: their wild society is not fit for such as you are. Come with me; eat and repose, and then we shall see what means can be found to employ you in usefulness and honour.”

“No more Zingaras!” exclaimed the girl; “no more Zingaras! O joy! Dear woman—good lady! O, I had such fear, such sorrow at the thought of going to them,” and down she sunk on her knees, and seizing the good woman’s cloak, kissed it with rapture, and laughed wildly, and burst into tears, and struggled with the spasmodic workings in her throat that almost choked her, till her emotion

became contagious, and scarcely a dry eye was to be seen in the crowd which now gathered round us.

This incident, and the consequent arrangements into which I entered with the kind and judicious Margaret Wenzler for the poor child's future support and instruction, detained me a considerable time at Mayence; and in that time her character had developed itself so interestingly,—she was so good, so beautiful, so helpless, that what was at first a work of charity, became at length one of love. I loved Fiammetta, dearly—tenderly loved her, with something of a brother's affection. I never had a sister, but it seemed to me as if the interest which I felt for her, was of near kin in its purity—I may almost say holiness, to that sacred feeling.

At length I quitted Mayence, and following lazily the windings of the Rhine, came up, near to Dusseldorf, with the troop of Zingaras to whom Fiammetta's protectress had belonged,—a fierce banditti, bold and lawless, at war with the restrictions of society, but obsequious ministers to the vices and weaknesses of man. Virtuous Naomi! how

my heart blessed her name who had so carefully screened the poor Fiammetta from such guilty contact, for she knew of nothing but the glens and forests, the simple and romantic features of their rude life; she remembered their moonlight encampments, their day-break marches, the long hours when she had watched and worked with Naomi; their wild looks had often frightened her, but she knew nothing of their wilder lives. The vigilance of affection had saved her from acquaintance with vice, or even from the knowledge of its existence.

I stopped in the midst of the troop. A tall woman, whose gaudy vest was coarsely decorated with barbaric finery and hung with small bells that jingled as she moved, strode towards me, and advancing her fearful eyes into my face, offered in the rude jargon of the tribe, to tell me whether the lady of my love hunted or hawked that day. Then suddenly stopping, and spelling the lines of my countenance with intense and searching interest, "Out into the desert! (she cried,) out into the desert! The ban is on thee, marked and miserable!" Then raising her skinny hands above the crimson folds of her headcloth, while live fire seemed to flash from her superhuman eyes, she remained

an instant motionless. The next moment her lips quivered, her eyes looked inwards, as if communing with her deadly thoughts, a thick moisture covered her sallow forehead, the skinny hands were lowered slowly and heavily, and something of the iron rigour of her look passed away while in a hollow and unnatural voice she pronounced the awful anathema.

“Woe unto thee, fated one! woe unto thee! The brand is on thee; the spotted pard is at thy heels; the howl is up, and the red moon rings to the echo! Keep to the desert—keep to the desert; tread not on marble floors, nor let gilded canopies cover thee. There’s music in the air; there’s joy, there’s revelry; it is the last song! She’s there—she stalks by—death’s in her foul glance. Off to the desert, woful one! off to the desert! The strong hand is on thee; it drags thee down—down—down.” And then with a wild shout that sounded like the clamour of a hundred voices, she fled into the woods, leaving me more fearfully impressed than I cared to acknowledge.

A handsome girl, who was gathering up her heavy hair under a band of white linen, called to me, and said in a frightened accent, “What has

Kezia told thee?" Then approaching nearer, "She is the wicked one; the raven and the skull are hers; listen to me."

I did so; a weak and superstitious feeling mastered my better reason. One skilled like Kezia, could have worked me up to the wildest pitch of credulity, but the young sibyl was only a beginner. I saw her set her features to a pitch of artificial immobility, as if she waited the workings of the spirit; and when, with the professional wheedle of the tribe, she said, "Give me money; he will not speak else," I turned away in disgust, ashamed of the emotion which these juggling impostors had stirred up within me, and blessing that Providence which had preserved the dear Fiammetta from their terrific influence.

And yet the ban of the wild woman often sounded in my ear startingly; and often when I have made one in a crowd of courtly revellers, a sudden reminiscence has crossed me, and my heart has shrunk as from the gripe of something deadly. But time passed on, and at length I thought no more of it.

Twice every year I visited Mayence, and passed some time in the neighbourhood of Fiammetta's dwelling. How fair she grew, and how I loved

her ! loved her for what she was, and for what I had done for her. Any one would have done the same ; it was pure self-gratification, and yet there was something intoxicating in the feeling of having been instrumental to her preservation, in calling myself her sole friend on earth, excepting only Margaret.

Circumstances at length occurred, over which I had no control, that detained me in a distant spot for two long years. In that interval, Margaret's child, a sickly and ailing infant, died, and Fiammetta became in her turn her comforter. I wrote frequently, but suddenly they who had always been scrupulously punctual in their answers, became silent. Five months elapsed, and still I heard nothing of them ; I became alarmed, my heart foreboded evil, I could no longer endure the irritation of suspense ; so I turned my face once more towards the Rhine, and arriving late at night at Mayence, stopped before the gate of an inn at no great distance from the abode of Fiammetta.

Lights still burned in the hall, and five or six guests still lingered sleepily round the public table. I took my station in a corner far apart from their neighbourhood, called for wine of the best Rhenish

growth, and insured the host's communicativeness by inviting him to partake of it with me; and then, while my heart beat and my voice trembled, turned the conversation into a channel which soon led to the inquiries I panted to make.

The landlord knew them well, both Margaret and her daughter,—for so from habit he called Fiammetta, though he as well as all the townsfolk of Mayence had heard her story. “She was (he said) the handsomest maiden in the whole Electorate,—ay, or the Palatinate to boot,—and as virtuous as she was fair; proud too, and with the port of a princess, yet kind and gentle, so that all who knew her, had something good to say of her. But she had a sure mark to go by, (he added,) for a more prudent or a more pious woman lived not in Mayence than Margaret Wenzler; none could say ill of her, and that made the wonder all the greater when they disappeared.”

“How!” I exclaimed, “disappeared?”

“Ay,” continued he, “and all in a moment, as a star falls.”

My heart sunk at the comparison.

“Had it been Martha Heidegger and her bold daughter Meichen, (said he,) none would have

wondered ; but Margaret and Fiammetta ! that modest child, who blushed up to the eyes if any one praised her beauty.”

“ But how ? ” said I, horror-struck. “ Is there no clue ? has no light been thrown on this strange affair ? ”

“ Light, do you say ? ” returned the hostess, who sat spinning beside the stove ; “ ay, light enough has been thrown upon it, but it’s the light of darkness. However there are those who can read by it as well as by the best lamp.—But I am no scandal-monger,—only I would say, that she who makes a hard bed, should lie on it ; and that a young maiden who encourages strollers, is a fair mark for a free tongue.”

“ Say a foul one,” interrupted the host indignantly. Then turning to me, he added, “ Better wear out than rust out,—that’s the women’s motto when the organ of speech is in question. But the truth is, that a stranger came this way, who chanced to see Fiammetta ; he followed her, and she shunned him. It might be that her reserve quickened his passion, for he hired a room in old Balthazar’s house, and there he passed whole days,—ay, and nights too, gazing on her chamber-window.

It was but a bird's-eye view after all; but these young romancers can see through a stone wall, if there be but a pair of bright eyes at the other side of it. However, he quitted Mayence at last, and was not seen for a full twelvemonth; when, on a Candlemas-eve, (I remember it well,) just as I turned round an abrupt corner not ten yards from Margaret's dwelling, a whisking wind drove him right against me. But he soon disappeared as he had done before, and about the same time Margaret paid the little that she owed,—it was but a trifle, for she was always an orderly and prudent woman,—and from that hour neither herself nor Fiammetta, have been either seen or heard of.

It would be useless to detail the additional comments of the honest landlord, or the less merciful conjectures of his wife; or to enumerate the fruitless researches which I continued to make until hope was extinct within me, and nothing remained but the bitterness of self-reproach,—for had I not fostered and then neglected her? not voluntarily, it was true, but still in fact.

And yet she was most dear to me, and still dearer for the sweet and gentle recollections awakened by the sight of the house where she had

dwelt. Alas! as we close the golden legend of hope, the book of memory opens of itself. Every day I visited the chamber that had been her own particular habitation. It was small, and entirely turned away from the bustle of the town, with a large walnut-tree spread out before its only window; and beneath, a narrow garden, green and lonely, but full of sweet-smelling flowers carefully fostered into luxuriance.

It was just as she had left it,—the small white couch within its neat recess, the little silk slippers beside it, the modest book-shelves simply arranged, the table covered with a fine cloth, and strewn with fragments of paper, pencils, flowers pressed between blank leaves, and drawings indifferently executed, but gracefully conceived: in short, all the evidences of female occupation remained, but she herself was gone—gone! and whither? Perhaps betrayed to guilt and wretchedness, while I had loitered on, wasting in childish murmurs my ineffectual tenderness.

Daily, and for hours together, I used to sit buried in that vague abstraction, which is not thought because it has neither direction or consistency, gazing on whatever object fell beneath my

eye, without remembering where I was, or knowing what I looked at. One day I took up a book mechanically; a paper fell from it, it was a drawing of Fiammetta's, a likeness of herself, sketched with more skill than I believed her to possess; and on the margin was written, "For my dear master." It was thus that, as the director of her studies, she used from her childhood to call me; and the softness with which she used to pronounce a word, stern in its ordinary bearing, had made its sound precious and pleasant to my ear. If I had not already begun to suspect the weakness of my heart, the emotion which this little incident caused me would have opened my eyes; but the same moment which had revealed to me Fiammetta's flight, had taught me a secret of which I had long been the unconscious possessor.

I became master of the house, giving the owner what he wished for it, for I could not bear that the hand of a stranger should displace any thing which Fiammetta's had arranged; and then I quitted Mayence, lured southwards by an idle invention, a false hope which ended in disappoint-

ment. Foiled in the expectation which had led me across the Alps, I retraced my steps through the valleys of the Tyrol, first turning from my path to visit Venice; and this I was induced to do by some words dropped by a stranger, with whom I chanced to talk in a coffee-house at Brescia.

This youth was (as he said) a student of Padua, who having lately been for his pleasure at Venice, had there seen a lady descend from the piazzetta into her gondola, whose image seemed to possess his wild and passionate nature with the power of an enchantment. She was accompanied by a cavalier, and their fleet boat had shot off silently along the canal of the Giudecca, and had been lost to his sight before he could disengage himself from a companion who hung upon him, enter another, and pursue it. But the memory of her beauty had not escaped from his mind; and he reproduced it with a glow and freshness, but above all an identity, which seemed to give back the figure of Fiammetta. She had spoken but two words, and those of common import, but the accent (he said) was marked enough to assure him it was foreign; and then he repeated them again and again, until

his voice seemed to have caught the very trick of her own low and peculiar organ.

On this weak hope I sped to Venice, that fair city of the sea, which seems to have no root in the earth, but to float to the music of those sweet symphonies that swell for ever within it. There again I was disappointed, as I was often afterwards by false hopes born of my own wishes. But on that part of my story I shall be silent ; it is enough to say, that after a dreary winter fruitlessly passed amongst the Styrian mountains, I descended from my lonely hiding-place, and journeying onwards from town to town, arrived in the city of Leipsic late one afternoon, and stopping at the inn of the Saxische Hof, inquired for accommodation for the night. A small chamber was yielded to me with difficulty, the house being full to overflowing ; but as it was not to be vacant for an hour, I was fain to content myself with a bench in the public room where many people were assembled, all busily discussing, with the vehement energy of contending opinions, some subject apparently of general interest. Crowds passed the windows, carriages poured in from all quarters, all was uproar, anxiety, and confusion.

“No doubt,” said I, addressing myself to a young man who sat near me, “this is the eve of the great fair?”

“One might well think so,” he replied, “by the press and bustle. But whence comest thou, pilgrim?” added he gaily. “Is’t from Jerusalem? or perhaps farther off yet? For else thou wouldst have known that the famous Zingara girl plays to-night; and that moreover the Prince Albert, own nephew to the noble Duke of Hunenstadt who is sojourning here, and his fair young wife, are coming to look at her.”

“And who is this famous Zingara?” I asked, while a strange dread came over me.

“Who is this Zingara!” he exclaimed. “By the saints, my friend, you can hardly be of this world, and not have heard of her. Why she is the first actress of the Dresden company, and better still, the greatest beauty in the empire. She has been to Vienna to play before the court, and all the princes are mad for her. Ah, she is a bright creature, and a wild one, I promise you.”

“And her name?” said I tremblingly.

“O, for that,” replied my neighbour, “she calls herself Zoraida; but these folks have many names,

and the real one may be far off yet. But if you care to see her, you must lose no time; for this is the first night of her playing since she has come back to us, and seats must be bought with gold." And speaking thus, he rose; and I rose likewise and followed him instinctively to the entrance of the theatre.

The door was already blocked, but he pushed on boldly. At length we forced our way in, and having wedged ourselves into an obscure and distant corner, previously occupied by two persons who for a large temptation had suffered themselves to be displaced, waited for the opening of the play.

And how did I await it? O torment inexpressible! O uncertainty, a thousand times more cruel than the defined and palpable reality, with what images of guilt and degradation did you harass and distract my mind! What thoughts fermented within it—formless and frightful! To force myself out of this horrible state, I drew my treasure—the likeness of Fiammetta—from my bosom, and while I gazed upon it, my companion, unobserved by me, gazed also; but no sooner had his eye caught a glance of the figure, than he exclaimed,

“By Saint Boniface, thou wert too many for me! Why thou hast her there, the Zingara! and as like as a pattern taken against a window glass. And thou wouldst fain learn her name?” continued he, with an aping of simplicity. “Ah, ah! you quiet ones are always too keen for us wags.” And so he ran on, confirming my worst fears, while my heart started and sunk at every noise that came from the still curtained stage.

I would have given worlds to have rushed out into the open air, to have felt the wind hurrying me fiercely forward, for my distracted mind and cribbed position made almost madness together. I had now the all but certainty that Fiammetta and Zoraida were one; and yet I did not believe it. I seemed to have two separate intelligences within me. I expected that when the curtain rose I should behold her; I felt as if there could be no doubt of it, and yet I did not think it possible. In short, I no longer knew what I thought; it seemed as if the tumultuous beatings of my heart prevented me from hearing the whisperings of my reason. All this sounds like madness, perhaps it was so.

I was roused from this frightful state by a

sudden movement in the audience; all eyes were turned towards the duke's box. A moment after he appeared, leading in the young wife of his nephew the Prince Albert, who followed him. The lady advanced for a moment to the front of the box, and then placed herself a little behind the fold of a curtain, so that from where I sat nothing was visible but the turn of the head, and a fair shoulder with some dark ringlets falling like shadows on its whiteness; but what was she to me,—nothing; so I turned away, and fixed my eyes on the curtain.

It rose slowly; a murmur of impatience, a shout of welcome was heard, and then a deafening peal of applause. A tall and dazzling figure advanced from the back of the stage and bowed slightly, with a hurried motion of the head—wild but graceful,—and rather expressive of disdain than gratitude. At the same moment Prince Albert rose from his seat, and whispering something in the duke's ear, quitted the box.

This I learned afterwards from my companion, for I saw nothing. I stood there like one electrified, not comprehending the shock that had almost annihilated me, my horrible apprehensions all con-

firmed, and she in whom I had garnered my heart's hopes, blasted and shamed before me ! It seemed indeed Fiammetta ; taller greatly than when I had left her,—but that, of course,—and darker,—but that too might be ; my distance from her was great, and the light between us glaring,—I could not see distinctly.

My first emotion was rage—unmixed rage ; there was no pardon, no compassion. I would have rushed out of the house, but every avenue was obstructed. I chafed like a wild beast at bay ; my fingers were contorted, my limbs sunk under me. I sat down and hid my face ; and then she spoke, and I pitied her,—my tears fell. The voice was not her natural one, it was another,—ruder and more sad. Its sound, too, was far from me, and faint ; but I remembered how sweet it used to be in the innocent days that were gone for ever !

My feelings seemed to have changed suddenly ; it was no longer anger, but compassion, and O how deep and real ! I looked again at the stage ; my eyes had become accustomed to the light, or perhaps it burned more dimly. I know not, but she seemed to come nearer to me. I saw her

plainly,—there was a strange look in her eyes ; it was not the look of Fiammetta, but,—and O with what sorrow did the thought oppress me ! she was not herself the same ; and how could she—no longer the pure, the virtuous—look as she once had done ?

At length the play ended,—I knew not how ; and hurrying out, I returned to the inn, shut myself up in my chamber, and passed hours of ineffable wretchedness.

There was thunder in the night,—I shall never forget it. First, a distant peal ; but growing louder as it approached, and then bursting over the city like the explosion of some dread machinery worked by demons. Then there was a dead silence, no life in leaf or grass, nor breath in any thing. I thought the sky grew clearer, when suddenly there came an uproarious storm, driving as if from every part of the heavens at once ; two old trees that stood before my windows swung about and shook down their heavy branches as if they were dry leaves, and the tempest blew against them, and forced their stout boughs together, and

brought darkness; and then came another blast and rent them open, and made light. It was fearful; and that Zingara, she whom I had forgotten for years,—the old prophetess,—seemed to be there in the midst of it.

I rose early, with a mountain of sorrow on my breast; and after a long struggle with my outraged feelings, determined to have an interview with Fiammetta. While I dressed hastily, a woman whose face was concealed by her veil, crossed the street and entered the inn. She staid but a moment, and again passing, turned into a court at a distance. Her air was familiar to me; I thought she had the stature and gait of Margaret; but there was a sober richness in her dress, a character of decent quiet, that could not (I believed) belong to the companion of the fallen Fiammetta.

While my eyes followed her, a servant entered with a letter, which had (he said) been left by a lady, who had asked no question and departed instantly. The writing was Fiammetta's. I opened it as if it had been a death-warrant, and read these words:—

“Dear and honoured master: it is Fiammetta, it is your pupil, she whom you loved to call your

sister, who writes to you, who earnestly conjures you to see her, to listen to the confession of her imprudence, and of the events which led to it and forced her to conceal from her revered benefactor the changes of her fortune. Since then she has caused you to be sought for every where, but always fruitlessly until last night, when fate sent you here:—may it be to forgive one who owes all to you, and who cannot be happy while you think unkindly of her !”

I read these lines again and again ; and still as I read, my mind became more confused. This was not the letter of a sinner, such as I imagined Fiammetta, of one lost to all sense of shame : had she been insensible to her abject state, she would neither have cared for my forgiveness nor exposed herself to my reproof. True, there was an avowal of error, but of error that sought and expected to justify itself ; it seemed the candour of a high and fearless mind, that only asked to disclose its secrets and their motives. I could not believe her innocent ; and yet there was something in the tenour of this short note which almost made me hope, even with the evidences of her ruin before me, that my own imagination and the exaggerated reports of

others had magnified imprudence—perhaps levity, into guilt.

A line within the cover directed me to a certain door in a distant suburb street. I found it easily; and giving the indicated signal, was admitted by a person who seemed to wait my coming, and who led me through an orchard-path into a garden, whose balmy redolence might have soothed a restless fancy, but not one so out of unison as mine was with the sight and perfume of nature. A vast building of stately aspect appeared at intervals through the green vistas; statues gleamed in the distance, fountains threw up their liquid columns, which breaking in the air, fell in diamond showers on the fresh grass. Could this be the abode of Fiammetta? And if hers,—dishonourable acquisition—debasing splendour!

The graceful façade of a pavilion rose before me. I entered, following my conductress, into a small saloon lined with marble: here she left me. The wild fever of my mind had subsided; a kind of troubled calm, like the swell that follows the hushing of the tempest, had succeeded. I had leisure to examine, and I did so with intense interest, every thing that could indicate the cast

of mind and habitual occupations of her, about whose image—defaced as it was—my heart yet hovered. I felt as if I had entered the abode of a fallen angel, in which the faint odours of a distant heaven still lingered, like the rich vapour exhaled from the flame of some costly Arabian wood, whose incense perfumes the spot on which it has expired long after its ashes have become cold.

A perfect stillness reigned in the pavilion; the air overflowed with sweetness. I approached a large window that opened on a garden scene, quiet and confined, but green and flowery; fresh grass, a bubbling spring, and the umbrella-shade of some tall pines gave it coolness and beauty. Two chairs were drawn close together near to the window; on one was thrown a shawl and a woman's glove; an unfinished portrait of a child lay upon a table, and near it an open volume. I looked at it; it was *Zimmerman on Solitude*. On the floor were scattered some of the earliest toys of infancy; and among them a little shoe, still warm as if it had just fallen from the baby foot. Every thing bore the mark of domestic habitation,—I might say of domestic love. I seemed to breathe the atmosphere of virtue, and hope once more entered into my soul.

She must (I thought) be innocent. An open scroll lay upon the table; my eyes fell inadvertently upon the superscription, it was "To the beautiful Zoraida." A deadly chill came over me; the door opened, and Fiammetta sprang towards me in all the breathless joy of welcome.

I cannot tell what passed,—I never could remember it; but she was forgiven before she had time to justify herself, or I to recollect the guilt of which a moment before I had believed her culpable. And there we sat, and she looked at me with her fair innocent eyes,—kind eyes, with beautiful tears in them,—and called me her dear master; and there was something so chaste and proud in her young mien, that she seemed more fit to be the bride of Jupiter, than the player-queen whom I had seen a few hours before. And yet I still doubted; for when I tried to recollect Zoraida, her image became confounded in my mind with the bright form before me, until they seemed to me the same.

My perturbed silence confused Fiammetta. "Master," she said, "you do not speak to me;

you are displeased,—and justly. But listen to my story, and then deal with me as your heart shall dictate.”

And then she told me, in her sweet way, how she and Margaret had sorrowed at my absence, and how they lived in solitude, content in all things save only in our prolonged separation; when one evening, as she stood at a window, not knowing that any one looked at her, and spoke to Margaret who was in the garden beneath, a stranger saw her, and humble (she said) as were her claims, found her more to his heart’s fancy than any of the proud beauties to whose splendour his eye had been accustomed.

It were long to tell the means he tried, the stratagems he devised to gain her ear, and how he had at last succeeded; and how Margaret had told him her strange story, and spoke so touchingly of her chaste life, and virtuous nature, and friendlessness, that his generous feelings worked within him; and seeing that her happiness, and perhaps his own honour was at stake, he quitted Mayence, and no more was heard of him for many months.

But it was too late; the blow was already struck, and she pined silently; and he too, though

he had gone away to forget her, was as unhappy as herself: and so after many trials he went back to Mayence, and there—persuaded by the eloquence of her lover, by the pleadings of her own heart, and by the counsels of Margaret, who having no one to advise with ventured to decide from her own judgment,—she consented to unite herself with him privately, agreeing to conceal her marriage from all the world—even from me, until her husband should obtain the forgiveness of his family.

“For this great error pardon me, dear master,” continued Fiammetta, with tears in her bright eyes. “I know how wrong it was to have used concealment,—and that too in the most important action of my life,—with one to whom I owe more—much more than life itself; and bitter has been my sorrow for it, and many a secret tear, a silent pang has it cost me, to think of what you must have endured in your dark uncertainty as to her fate, who ought to have been to you like a child, gladdening your heart and making it a proud one.”

“Ah, Fiammetta!” I exclaimed, interrupting her, “that was nothing. True it was not kind, perhaps not merited; but it matters not now; it is wholly forgotten. It is the sequel,—it is what

followed that is irreparable. O Fiammetta ! how can I reconcile a virtuous choice, an honourable marriage, with the humiliating situation—(the scroll of paper was full in view)—in which I find you—”

A quick red flushed her cheek, she rose up, and as she stood before me in her indignation, her stature seemed to heighten. Suddenly her lip quivered, tears gathered in her eyes, the cloud passed from her brow, and sitting down again beside me, she said in her usual tone of gentleness,

“What do you mean, dear master ? My error was a heavy one, but did you not say that you had forgiven me ? How then have I fallen so low as to merit these awful reproaches ?”

“Ah Fiammetta !” I exclaimed, “that air of innocence, of candour, cannot impose on one who has seen Zoraida.”

A pause of a moment ensued,—a pause made eloquent by her look of speechless astonishment ; and then, as if a thought passed rapidly through her mind, she exclaimed, “Good heaven ! can it be possible ?” then added reproachfully, “and you could believe it ? But it was natural,” she said with sweetness, as if to reconcile me to myself, “the likeness is so great.”

“Likeness!” I cried in a transport of joy, “is it only a likeness? Heaven be thanked for it! And you, my Fiammetta,—can you forgive my foul suspicion?” and I would have fallen at her feet, but she would not suffer it, continuing still to dwell upon the resemblance which the young Zingara bore to her, as justifying my delusion.

“They say, (she added,) that on a nearer approach, the likeness ceases altogether; but when she appears upon the stage advancing from a distance, all who know me are struck by it. Last night at supper the duke talked of it to every one. But my husband approaches; you must know and love one who has long honoured you.”

As she spoke, a young man entered from the garden, and as he advanced towards me with the earnest welcome of long-felt friendship, I beheld, to my utter astonishment, the Prince Albert, whose fine countenance, though seen but for a moment, had left its traces on my memory.

And thus I found Fiammetta,—not lost, not degraded, not the hired exhibitor of a worthless talent; but loved and honoured, high and happy. And who that looked upon her,—pure, good, and beautiful as she was, who that read the bright

character of virtue which shone in her chaste eyes, could say that her lot was unmerited.

It was a golden day,—that one which we passed together, a heartfelt one, and Margaret who had been a mother to Fiammetta, was there receiving from her the services of a child. As for me, my heart seemed to be renewed within me, the foolish passion which troubled my reason had taken a fitter shape. I beheld in Fiammetta a happy wife, loving and beloved, and the feelings of a brother again filled my breast. Alas, I had not always been so wise! I had been even weak enough to have forgotten our ill-matched years; but her filial and confiding language brought at once before me the folly of my delusion, and the absurd character which it communicated to an interest that, to be pure or generous, ought to have no touch of selfish reservation, no passion whose gross vapour could thicken or obscure its fair transparency.

Fiammetta had a child—and such a one! just like day-break. I took it upon my knee; it seemed pleased with me, and as I caressed it, its mother

soothed it with a sweet, sad melody, to which a moon-struck youth in the duke's household had set some woe-begone rhymes, inscribing them "To the beautiful Zoraida."

I had always loved music with fervour ; it has ever seemed to me to run before painting in the race of passion ; the one repeats images which have been before presented to the eye, but the other gives back the emotions of the soul. That day I felt myself more than usually affected by its influence,—it played subtilely on the chords of my soul.

The song was the same which had helped by its superscription to prolong my mistake ; he who made it had gone crazed for love of the wild Zingara, who had abused his reason, and then despised his heart. She had sung to him like Schemselnihar, and he had gazed upon her like the Prince of Persia, until she grew weary and he mad ; " and now (said Fiammetta) he sits all day long in her gateway, and watches till she passes out, and bows gravely ; or seems to catch a word, to whose imagined sound he answers with a sad earnestness, that brings tears into indifferent eyes. She never looks his way ; but at the close of even-

ing, a young girl, who had loved him when he scorned her, comes to the gateway, watches his movements, and draws him with kind cunning to the dwelling of her mother, who guards and fosters him as if he were her son."

The story touched me,—there was something in its simplicity that made its way to my heart. I pitied the poor youth whose love was so warm and true, and detested the Zingara whose arts had crossed and crushed a spirit so gently moulded. To please my fancy, Fiammetta sang for me once more the doleful ballad, and the words still rest upon my memory, twisted up with the strange events of that evening, and thus went their mournful measure:—

Cheated lover, why believe her?
Do not think her vows sincere; .
She will grieve thee, and bereave thee,
Leaving nothing but despair.

Fair her smiles are, soft as day's star,
And her maiden mien is mild;
She can blush, too, if a youth woo,
Looking like a simple child.

And her sweet eyes, to the blue skies
Brightly raising, she can seem
Pure and radiant, at the pageant
Of a lonely lover's dream.

Nothing like her voice was ever
Heard beneath the summer's sky ;
When in soft notes that sweet voice floats,
Foolish lover, you should fly.

Fond and faithful, the ungrateful
Will not give to thee a sigh ;
Pledges slighted, fond hopes blighted,
She will leave thee there to die.

And then with the wildness of an unsettled fancy he had written underneath, “ Beautiful Zoraida, this for thy lovers, from one who has bought a sorrowful right to counsel them ; but for thyself, —blessings !”

On that same night there was a concert in the duke's palace, and it was his pleasure that Prince Albert and his fair wife should grace it with their presence. The music was heavy and laboured ; we yawned and looked impatiently at each other ; suddenly the instruments ceased,—there was a short but profound silence, and then broke out a burst of harmony, an ecstasy of sound, a joyous cry of many voices,—changing at once into the wailings of despair. A second pause succeeded, and then a symphony so tremulous and mournful

that those who had smiled before, shed tears unknowingly.

What did all this prelude? we asked each other; and before the answer came, Zoraida rushed upon the stage, her black hair streaming in wild disorder, her cheek pale, her eye unquiet, with a vague investigation in it fearful as the pursuing yet fixed orb of the sheeted spectre. Within the grasp of her small strong hand gleamed a dagger, which she clenched with a firmness that had fury in it. My God, that dagger!—But the duke, what did he say?—I have forgotten. O, he said it was a surprise, and that she would enact Medea—a part only; that scene where she murders her children. Fiammetta shuddered, but soon became absorbed in the horrible fiction.

The prince, who was at that moment in the front of the box, rose, and withdrawing from his conspicuous seat, placed himself less obviously. His emotion was strong and evident, he pressed his hand upon his forehead, his lip worked fearfully. “And yet (I said inwardly) it is but an illusion; men do not tremble at a play.” Just then Zoraida’s face was turned away; suddenly she looked towards us as if by chance,—and smiled!

I have seen the dead, the dying, the mad, the wicked, in all their ghastly stillness, or their fierce despair; but never did human eye behold, or human lip give form to any thing like that smile! The prince rose instantly, and left the theatre, and I followed, full of strange forebodings.

I found him in the same place where we had met in the morning, the small marble saloon that opened on the garden, pacing the floor with a hurried step, and muttering inwardly. He seized my hand as I entered.

“Ah, you are come,” he cried; “come to aid me with your counsel. Heaven knows, none can want it more than I do! No words, my friend; let’s to the purpose. That wild Bohemian,—she whom they call Zoraida—”

“Good heaven!” I exclaimed, “you do not love her?”

“Love her!” he repeated indignantly. “Foulest of fiends——But listen, and you shall know all. It is now six years since, (being then nineteen, and travelling alone in Hungary,) I passed at mid-day through the principal square of a town, when preparations were making for the execution of a criminal. A crowd had collected to witness

the hideous spectacle of a human being, in the plenitude of life, forced violently to a death not craved by nature—the death that forbids atonement!

“I turned hastily from the spot, and would have entered the inn; for at such moments even the aspect of nature seems to have crime in it, and the beautiful light of the sun, contrasted with the scene acting in its beams, oppressed me. But I had gone only a few steps, when I found the way obstructed by another crowd assembled before the entrance of a prison. Some forced a passage out, that they might secure a place from which they could behold the last act of the tragedy; others pressed round the door to get a sight of the criminal; and I, yielding to a horrible curiosity, at which, I had a moment before shuddered, entered with those for whom a bribe had procured admission.

“The condemned had been just brought forth into the inner court of the prison, a noxious hole, full of black and heavy vapour. She (for it was a woman) stood upright in the midst of her executioners, and offered her hands to be manacled. A priest exhorted her with mildness, and earnestly tendered her the consolations of religion; but she

turned away wrathfully, as if his well-meant efforts chafed her fierce spirit.

“She was of middle age, and taller than most men, with the wreck of features which might once have been called handsome; but to which hardships, and guilt, and shamelessness, (more than years,) had given a wild and deadly expression. Her dress and complexion bespoke her of the race of Zingaras, and she bore in her eye the marks of that unbending spirit, which quails not even before the terrible apparatus of a sudden and violent death. It was a callous eye; there was nothing human in its expression; it was the eye of one who had neither hope, or fear, or memory; of one within whose heart all human sympathies, if ever such had existed there, were utterly extinguished.

“But it was not so; unconquerable nature still grappled within her. There was a slight rustling, a faint groan; it came from the dungeon which she had just quitted. ‘Ah, she is still there! (she cried.) Once more,—once more, my Kallida!’ And then, her strong features relaxing into tenderness,—‘Not yet,’ she said, struggling with the executioner, who had begun to

bind her hands; 'Not yet. Free me, I conjure thee; let me once more hold her in those arms that have nursed and fondled her.'

"While she spoke, a creature who seemed more dead than alive, tottered out and dropped on the ground beside her. The executioner repulsed her sternly. 'Look at her!' she cried, in a voice that made the spectators fall back in terror, 'and dare to refuse me, if thou art thyself a father. Is a mother's last kiss a crime? and am I not thine out and out, dressed for the blood wedding? What wouldst thou have more? I cannot tempt with blessings,—I have forgotten how all that is; but I can curse, I of the dark race, who never yet cursed fruitlessly.'

"'Woman,' said the executioner coldly, and as one accustomed to such scenes, 'your hour is come. It is time that I should do my duty; I have suffered you to rave too long.'

"At these words, the girl raising herself up slowly from the ground, said in a faint interrupted voice, 'Mother, I can still embrace thee!' and then throwing her arms wildly round the neck of her who was bound, hung upon her, and received the last,—long kiss, with which went all that re-

mained of woman from the mother's heart. The rest was rage, and imprecation, and horrible fearlessness,—too horrible to think of even now.

“The wretched girl left thus alone in the world, and with the brand of infamy upon her, seemed to me in too pitiable a condition to be coldly abandoned to her fate. She was about fifteen, and beautiful in her wild way. I placed her under the care of kind and estimable persons, whom I thought likely to win rather than scare her into virtue, and who were tempted more by compassion than by interest to undertake the charge. After which I saw but little of her; yet enough to observe, when the first short though excruciating pang was over, a certain insensibility to shame, mixed with an intemperance of passion which presaged badly for her future character.

“Soon after this I travelled into Italy, where I remained two years. It was during my stay at Genoa, that a letter reached me from the persons to whose care I had confided Kallida, giving me a melancholy detail of her perverse conduct and recent disappearance,—how, or with whom, they knew not. I lamented the unfortunate issue of my efforts to reclaim this lost creature, but other

scenes and deeper interests soon effaced her from my mind. I saw and loved Fiammetta, and that pure and exclusive love absorbed all weaker feeling.

“It was after I had quitted her at Mayence, that journeying northwards, and finding myself one evening alone at an inn in a small town of Silesia, I asked if there was any place of public amusement open. The landlord, to whom my question was addressed, inquired with a gesture of surprise, if I had not heard of the famous Hungarian dancing-girl, who turned all the heads in the district. She had come there (he said) with a troop of players, who were making their rounds in the province, and danced between the acts the national and characteristic dances,—not only of her own country, but of all the wandering tribes that frequented it.

“My thoughts being then but poor company,—for there was no hope in them,—I went to the theatre to get rid of their importunity, but expecting little amusement from witnessing the grotesque writhings and unseemly turbulence of a vulgar bacchante. She appeared, and I at once recognised Kallida,—tall, formed, bold, but not ignoble,

and certainly beautiful, though with a wild and wayward look that had a lurking demon in it.

“The appearance of a stranger of seeming condition in a small place seldom visited by travellers, is always remarked. Kallida’s eyes were immediately turned to the spot where I had placed myself. She knew me instantly. I saw her redden through the paint with which her cheek was covered; but she danced on, with the same free and unabashed gesture, bringing down tumultuous plaudits by the characteristic expression, grace, and rapidity of her movements. It was to me a melancholy exhibition, a display of libertine talent, threatening at every moment to overstep the boundaries of decency.

“My interest for Kallida had been much enfeebled by her misconduct; yet still I wished to rescue her from the utter degradation into which she had fallen. I saw her often, and pressed upon her the offer of my honest services; but she had talent,—and knew it, loved her roving life, and being altogether without principle, desired nothing but the means of living in dishonourable splendour. Fierce and proud, she scorned her obscure associates, and despised the vulgar raptures of a village rabble. Her ambition was to produce her-

self as a tragic actress on the boards of a court theatre; and then, with a fair field of display, and skill, boldness, and beauty, she relied on fate.

“‘The last wave must in turn be the first,’ she would say, ‘and who knows where the tide of fortune may drive me. My star is high in the heavens; there is no prouder in the firmament; and if I am to be the first gipsy-queen, at least I shall wear my crown grandly, and with somewhat better grace than those puling princesses who have milk in their veins,—not blood!’ It was useless to reason with her, for she had neither feeling nor judgment; but her passions were like the winds of the desert, uprooting every thing that opposed their passage, and it was my unhappy fate to call them forth in all the fury of their desperate energy.

“ In short, she said she loved me. She attacked, with the hardihood of one lost to all sense of shame, a heart devoted to another,—and that other Fiammetta. She was tender, passionate, jealous, and revengeful by turns; but her effrontery disgusted, and even her beauty displeased me. I acknowledged it rare and striking; when calm it had a character of grandeur, a regal bearing that imposed; but in moments of excitement it was the beauty

of a fury, or a fiend. The likeness which she bore to Fiammetta shocked me; it was a distant look, and faded as she came near, but it had something horrid in it. It was as if an infernal spirit had contrived for evil purposes to clothe itself in the investments of an angel.

“ I checked her advances with stern and unvarying coldness; still she pursued me, and for one whole year chased me from place to place with a determination that had something fearful in it. At length she lost her clue, and I returned to Mayence, and won over my Fiammetta to unite her fate with mine. Kallida heard,—I know not how,—of our marriage. She wrote to me,—the lines were traced in her blood,—‘ The thirst of vengeance (she said) has taken entire possession of my breast; as I have loved, so do I hate.’ And then she swore with horrible solemnity to revenge what she called my ‘ bitter scorn,’ not only on her whom I had chosen, but on all those who were dear to me, though certain to suffer death in the attempt.

“ ‘ You saw (she added) how my mother died, —fond wretch as she was,—yet bold. It was a fierce pang when they tore her from me, but she flinched not. Her strong soul resisted wrong,—

not death. The heart of Kallida is as firm as hers was; it has felt deeply,—and but once! It has loved as woman's heart alone can love, but it was scorned. *Your time will come!*'

“I feared this woman, for I knew her capable of all hellish things. So I found out some excuse that satisfied Fiammetta for quitting the spot to which she had traced us, and soon lighted on another hidden from her baneful scrutiny, and there, in our happy security, I began to forget my tormentor, or at least I ceased to dread her machinations. At length my family recalled me to my home. I returned, and my maternal uncle, the good duke, wishing that my Fiammetta should be known to him, invited us to be his guests. Last night we were induced to see the play; the name of Zoraida gave me no hint of Kallida, but the first glance withered my heart within me.

“I left the theatre instantly, and pleading sudden and important business, announced this morning my intention of departing during the night. But the duke would not hear of it. ‘Go (said he) to-morrow, if it must be so; but to-night we have prepared some music that will give you pleasure. There must be no refusal.’

“ My wife urged me to gratify the duke. I hesitated, but at last, ashamed of the dread with which a woman’s menaces had filled me, fatally for my peace consented,—first having (as I thought) made sure that there would be no play, and that I was safe from the hated presence of Zoraida.

“ You saw what passed; but you know not that, as I hastily left the concert-hall, some person thrust a paper into my hand, and instantly disappeared. I turned back, but saw no trace of any one.”

As he said this, he held a paper towards me; I took it from his feverish grasp, it contained these words:—“ Surround yourself with guards, block up your path with swordsmen,—it matters not; *your time is come!* The dastard surprises his foe, but the bold gives warning.”

I reflected for a moment on this fearful threat,—fearful no doubt, though it did not strike me at the time as altogether meriting the importance which the prince attached to it; and then began to offer such advice as seemed best suited to the circumstances, recommending that the duke should be at once made acquainted with the whole affair, and that such means should be taken to impotize Zoraida’s projects of vengeance as his wisdom

might suggest. Prince Albert approved of my suggestion, but his mind seemed lost in the dread of some immediate danger, some meditated vengeance of which Fiammetta was the object. "I have seen fighting, (he said,) battle-fighting in the open plain,—band to band, life to life; have made one in the more desperate warfare of the closed street without breach or outlet, where every blow was murder; but never did I feel as I do now. I was then alone, but now my other life quivers in my heart."

I was amazed to see a man of his known nerve quail thus before what seemed a visionary danger. I did not then reflect that its vague obscurity made its awfulness. All that I could say to tranquillize his mind I did, counselling and encouraging him to the best of my power.

While I yet spoke, the dial of a time-piece that stood near caught Prince Albert's eye. "In ten minutes (he said) the duke will retire; let us return, my friend, and protect Fiammetta to her chamber,—she must not quit the hall unguarded. We will then to the duke, and take counsel together. But who is it that stands at the window? Some one looks in."

I advanced towards it; it was open. All was still as death; the moon was clear and cold, it rode alone in the heavens. There were no clouds, but the tall pines cast down their shadows, and the grass was pale between them.

“See how beautiful it is,” I said. “There is nothing here to harm one.”

“Beautiful indeed!” he repeated, “and sad. This calm of nature, contrasted with the uproar within, (and he pressed his hand upon his forehead,) is awful! Night holds on in quiet: the crime which its shadows and its silence hide or engender, disturbs not its repose. But time passes; we must be gone,” and as he spoke, he dropped the curtain and moved towards the door. At the same instant the heavy drapery was lifted with violence, a hand was put forth; the prince turned round with instinctive courage, making a step forward, and before I could advance to his assistance, received the dagger of the terrible Kallida in his breast. She drew it out instantly, and holding it up with almost superhuman strength, while I struggled to wrench it from her, “It is his blood! (she cried); I swore it, and I have kept my word. And now for more vengeance!” I seized her

hands, and after a desperate struggle got possession of the dagger; but she writhed fiercely, like one wrestling with death, and while I grasped her with my right hand, the hold which I had of her with my left became every moment more infirm.

It was a perilous and awful moment; the life or death of all that I loved on earth hung on it. If Kallida escaped from my grasp, Fiammetta was lost for ever. I pointed the dagger towards her—to scare; I had no other thought. She sprang suddenly forward as if to wrest it from me, and before I knew that she was wounded, staggered back a step or two, and then dropped at my feet.

I have little recollection of the rest. I think the room was crowded with persons who ran about wildly, and Fiammetta was there shrieking on the body of her husband; but I remember she whom I had wounded rose up slowly on her knees, and said in an expiring voice, “It was not the dead who did it,—not him—not him. O, that I had died by his hand! But no; it was the unknown one,” and her ghastly finger pointed at me.

“Seize the murderer!” exclaimed a hundred

voices; and I was seized, and bound, and thrown into a dungeon. There I lay long in darkness, haunted by unnameable things; cold hands were pressed upon my forehead, and wild voices laughed and hissed at me, and shouted for the dead. The mad youth stood nightly at my door and sang his ditty, and asked me where I had hidden his Zoraida; and once I sat under the shadow of a hill, and beautiful spirits came about me, and called to each other in voices that had no breath in them, but came like a stream of light from heaven. And then I wept, and the vision left me, and I was again alone in my prison.

At length the doors were opened, and I was led forth to trial, and the sun shone again upon me. Then, and only then, I learned that Prince Albert lived, though still in a doubtful state. "But he lives!" I cried, and a ray of joy,—the first that had visited me in my dreariness, entered my soul.

The trial was solemn, and the issue, at first, doubtful. The words of the dying Kallida had designed me as her murderer. My friend, wound-

ed almost to death, and from the first insensible, could only give testimony to the previous circumstances, which bore, as far as concerned me, but slightly on the main event. But at length the truth became manifest, and I was sent abroad acquitted, innocent, and yet a murderer!

The brand was on me, — the prophecy was fulfilled! The world would have taken me back again, but my heart was lacerated. “You did well, (it said,) and boldly; you saved the life of Fiammetta, you exposed your own to the fury of an armed and desperate woman, you have rid the world of a monster; — was she not a murderess?” — “It was in self-defence that you slew her,” said one who would have comforted me; and I tried to answer, “I slew her not,” but the word stuck in my throat. It was an awful word, and when I would have uttered it, Kallida seemed to raise herself up again on her knees before me.

So strongly did remorse work against reason, that even the guilt of Kallida seemed to lose its character of hideousness; and there were moments when my warped mind found something grand in her audacious passion, something that lessened

the horror of her fiendish vengeance, and rendered the memory of my unpurposed crime more than ever frightful. Her beauty too,—as I recollected it in her last movement of life, seemed to me something amazing. I saw her for ever,—dying with her glittering robes about her, and her streaming hair dabbled with blood, with the diadem still set in its dark folds.

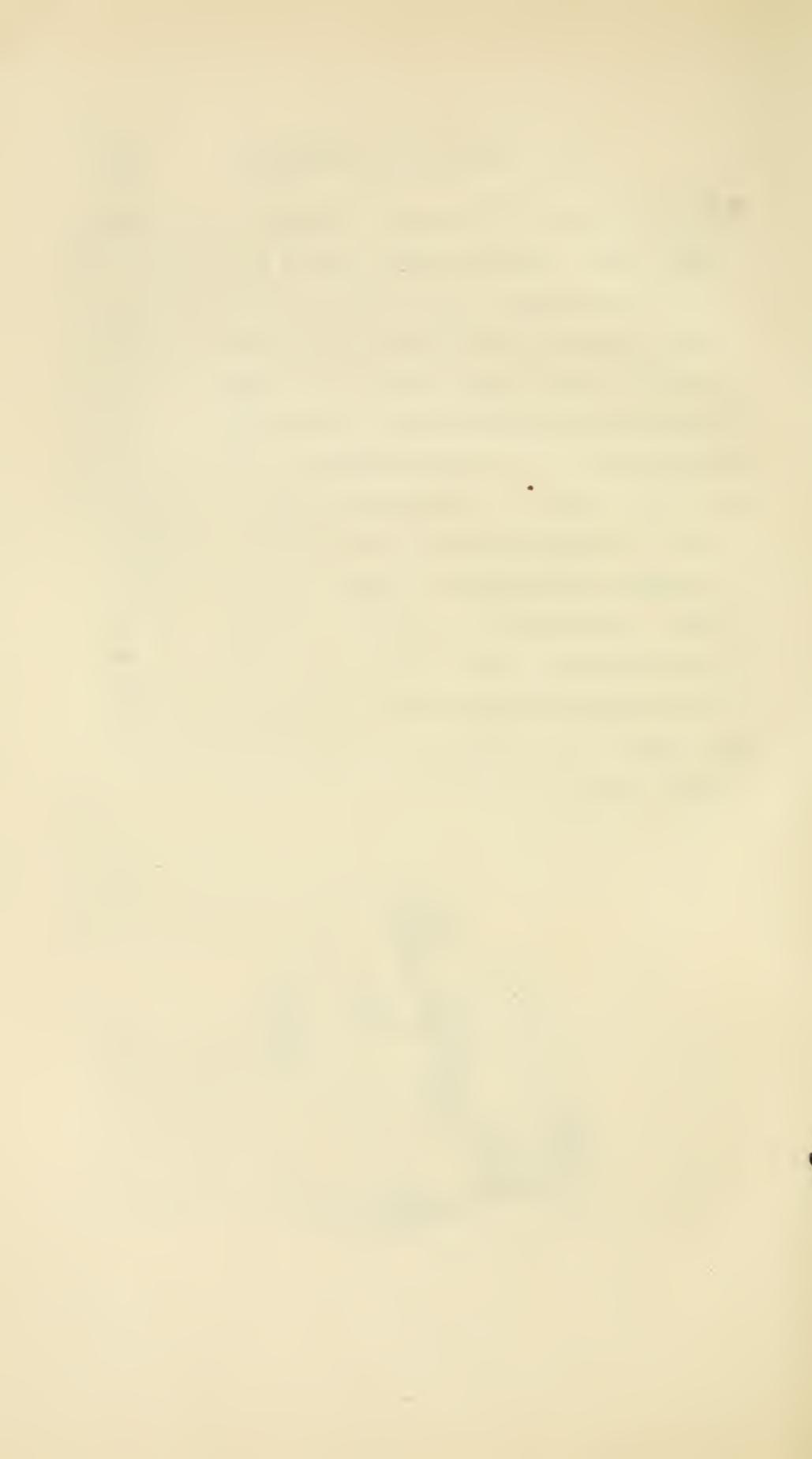
I believe my head was not as it used to be, nor my heart either, for the tender cares of Fiammetta and her husband afflicted me. I thought the solitude of the mountains would do me good, and I came amongst them. Here I live, forgotten by all but these two dear friends, who call themselves the cause of my misfortune, but are my only tie on earth; and happy to forget, among the simple people of the hills, the fatal hurricane of human passions.

He who thus recounted his story to a stranger, was a man passed the prime of life, a peasant of the Tyrol by his garb, but in his mien of high and noble bearing. He had lived long amongst the shepherds of the hills, and was re-

vered and loved by them. Whether he is still there, or has wandered farther off, I know not.

As the traveller, who wanders amidst the least visited paths of the Tyrolean mountains, ascends from the lonely glen called the Valley of the Lovers, and looks eastward on the distant chain that stretches off towards Carinthia, he may note upon the summit of the highest peak the ruins of a tower. Backwards from that tower the ground descends rapidly into a green opening nestled within wooded hills,—a land of Arcady. It was there the solitary lived, when at the fall of evening he sat before the door of his dwelling and offered its shelter to a traveller, who had lost his way in the mountains.





THE
VEILED WOMAN.



THE VEILED WOMAN.



—“The lidless dragon eyes!”

Orlando. Believe you, then, no supernatural influence?
Believe you not that spirits throng around us?

Coleridge's Remorse.

A TRAVELLER who had followed the course of a stream through the naked glens and bleak poplar valleys of Champagne until his eye had forgotten to remark their monotony, or his mind to note the lapse of time, found his progress suddenly impeded by the overflowing of a river swoln out of its customary channel. The fields were under water from one side of the valley to the other, and the tall poplars which stood up in regular rows, like the jacks of a harpsichord, seemed to grow out of the bosom of a glassy lake, as fancy groves do upon an Indian screen.

Nothing quickens the contemplative faculties so effectually as the repose of nature. In its stillness

the mind recovers the capacity of thought, the power of concentration, enfeebled or divided by the movement or the interest of external objects, and the imagination finds again its visions, sometimes fair and welcome ones, at others with the sad shadows of memory or apprehension blackening on them.

The traveller was a melancholy man, a dark dreamer ; there are scars in the heart over which the moss of time never grows, and the deep and deadly one which he bore within him festered still, though the day of its infliction had been long gone by. He was one with whom fate had dealt hardly, whose buds of happiness had fallen to the ground without blossoming ; one with whom the world had made gracious engagements and broken them, deceiving him, as it will to the end of time deceive all those who lean upon its reedy promises.

The winter snows were fast dissolving, and making wild rivers of the country brooks, changing their babbling speech into rough music, and bearing down their gentle limits ; but the traveller journeyed on with his recollections until the present was utterly forgotten, and he was almost walking in the waters before he perceived that the path

which he had at first followed had been long effaced. He looked round, but no track appeared ; it was a pale cold country, with a bleak sun glaring on it, neither house or hut was within sight ; it was evident that he had forsaken, without knowing it, the course of the stream, and had followed one of its deviating branches.

The point now was to find a way of getting out of the scrape ; and after a narrow inspection, a foot path winding upwards from a hollow into which the waters had not risen to any considerable height, caught his eye. It was a deep wade to get at it, but he succeeded, and following its traces, reached after much clambering, to the top of a hill round and green, and encrusted with moss and fragrant herbs, on which numerous flocks found pasture. A child, who was their guardian, sat whistling on a stone with a huge lump of black bread spread over with a layer of soft cheese in his hand, on which the rough dog who watched beside him gazed wistfully. The boy's patois and the stranger's more cultivated dialect had hard work to understand each other ; but at length the latter contrived to make out that a path leading downwards from the hill through an oak copse into a

narrow glen, would, if pursued without deviation, lead to a house at no great distance.

The traveller struck into the wood, and after descending for some time, came to the foot of the hill, when the path turning sharply round a projecting rock, a long and lonely valley opened before him. There was nothing unusual in its features, and yet the scene was not a common one. Two high and deeply indented ridges ran parallel with each other; they had neither the elevation of mountains nor the verdure of hills; they were rude and rocky, but where nature had offered a ledge, the industry of man had taken advantage of it to plant a few vines, which at that early season were no helps to beauty.

Between these hills lay a narrow and lonely valley, or rather stripe of land, with a clear and noiseless stream stealing through it. A shallow edging and some irregular patches of very green grass, whose freshness was fed by its moisture, marked its track, and looked like artificial colouring, contrasted with the rocky soil and arid tinting of the general picture. There was no other appearance of cultivation than the few vines,—neither sheep or shepherd, hut or tree, except one ancient oak, whose lower branches had yet life

in them, and still wore their winter leaves, while the bare and sapless top spread itself out on the sky, letting in the colouring of the heavens through its naked branches.

All who have observed nature, know how beautiful is the leafless oak when the fine intricacies, the bold off-sets of its graceful ramifications, are presented to the eye with a freedom of outline and a delicacy of detail powerful enough in themselves to sustain its entire character of majesty and beauty, even when the green covering, with its points of light and depth of shadow, its living and varied richness, is dead and gone. This single tree was in itself a grand and impressive image; and as it stood without offspring or companion alone in the still valley, it seemed to commune with heaven in that silent language which it would be presumption to translate into words. The glen was long and narrow, and the close hills threw shadows over it that appeared to deepen its depths; there was no visible issue, and the rocky projections which appeared to shut it up, folded over each other at the base, while the summits receding gently, let in a soft and far-off distance through the gleamy opening.

The traveller still went on, but no habitation rose before him, no object seemed to fill the space between the near hills and the far perspective. Twilight was gathering over the valley, but the break in the hills looked like a window in the heavens; he was still at some distance from it, and he paused for a moment while thought thickened on him. There is something in the solitude of nature that awakens melancholy; I have just said that it quickens contemplation—it does both. As we look upon its loneliness, a feeling in accordance with the surrounding gloom creeps into the mind and spreads through it, till the rocks and streams, the trackless hills and silent valleys are forgotten in the reflections which their solemn and mysterious aspect has awakened.

He turned, and looked back upon the narrow way, which half an hour before had seemed a pleasant valley; but it was all dark,—all except the stream that glided along like a thread of light, with the last gleam of day reflected on it. “It is like hope, (he said,) it out-lasts every thing; but it will fade too, even as thou didst, Azima!” He thought of the morning of his life, when the early sun shone on it; but the glory

of happiness had passed away; the red light in the west was gone; even the grey of twilight had hardened into cold, unchanging, everlasting night,—the night of the heart, that knows no second dawn!

Thus ruminating, he at length reached the issue of the defile, which proved to be a narrow path winding between the hills. He turned into it, and soon found himself in another valley, but of a different character from that through which he had already passed. Daylight still lingered on it; it was wide and wooded; a dark forest overspread the hills on one side, while of the other the vine had long since made itself master; the clear stream had become a discoloured river, and the double row of tall poplars, which it is so difficult to expunge from the landscape in France, stood up spare and erect along its banks.

An ungainly building,—old but not gothic, something between the castle of defence of the middle ages, and the modern accumulation called a *château*, spread out its walls at one side, occupying a spot, which for being a garden, was not the less a swamp. A long terrace extended itself in front of the house, fenced by a marble ba-

lustrade broken in many places, and decorated at intervals with stone vases full of coarse wall-flower, or baser dandelion, chance-sown, and disputing the nurturing earth with the sweet rose or delicate azalia. At each side, framing in the building, was an alley of lime-trees closely planted and squared into solidity; below the terrace a *charmille*; beyond that a stagnant pool with a cupid astride on a dolphin in the middle of it; then flower-knots still in winter misery, mixed up with patches of flax and ragged vine-stalks; then a high wall, a dry moat, a turnip-field, and last of all the river.

Behind the house was a spacious court, paved and overgrown with weeds and long grass; some huge blocks of stone lay about, and the repairs for which they were originally intended having been long forgotten, had bedded themselves into the earth, from which the stately thistle sprang up in barren luxuriance. Three sides of the court were surrounded by buildings, and across the fourth was extended a wide front of iron railing, with a gate in the centre as high again as the railing, and superbly flourished over, with the family eagle—beak and claws gilt—on the top of

it. Outside this lordly barrier was the dependent hamlet, and its modest though not unfeatured church; and nearer still, the free ground of every thing that chose to put itself there,—ruts, puddle, straw, fierce dogs, squalling children, and all the pell-mell of careless husbandry. The rest, up to the summit of the hill under which the castle stood, and far beyond it, was forest,—forest to the right and to the left, and every where except in front of the building, where a range of hills covered with short vine-plants, spread out their raw monotony.

The traveller found himself at fault. Here was evidently the spot to which the shepherd-boy had directed him, but there was no house of refuge, no creaking sign or hanging bush, or explanatory vine spreading its painted tendrils over a fierce red wall. Nothing in short of hospitable aspect, or even of decent seeming, except the castle itself, and there he dared not knock.

However, roofs were in view, and he was too well used to a rough bivouac to have retained much daintiness; so he approached a cottage, the door of which stood open. Within the porch sat an old man, who looked as if death had forgotten

him; his features spoke of time like an Egyptian hieroglyphic, to which the clue had long been lost; and on the ground was an infant playing with his feet as if they had been those of a statue. A young woman poured broth into a bowl, and kneeling on a stool before him, cooled it with her breath as she offered it to him affectionately. It might be thought that the picture,—being one of common and kindly nature, would have rather touched than offended; but the stranger gazed on it for a moment, and then shrinking back from the threshold, passed on.

Another cottage was near, a rude hovel; he advanced towards it and knocked. As he did so, a man of middle age and in the garb of a peasant, but with the air of better days, came towards him. He carried a gun on his shoulder, and was followed by a leash of dogs of a picked breed. Approaching the stranger, he greeted him cordially, saying, “You have fallen upon rough quarters, sir, and are too far from town or village to find such as might suit one of your appearance before nightfall.”

“I begin to be aware of that, my friend,” interrupted the stranger, “and mean to ask of these good people a seat by their fire till daybreak.”

“Meagre work, sir,” replied the peasant, “to hear green wood hiss and be served with unseasoned salad, when a man is cold and hungry; but if you will come with me, I think I can promise you better fare at the old house yonder.”

The traveller accepted the offer thankfully. It is, probably, (thought he, as he scanned his new acquaintance,) an ancient domestic, gardener, or gamekeeper,—perhaps all in one, as sometimes happens in old-fashioned country establishments. But it was not a moment to be nice: the air was sharpening into bitterness; and hateful to the stranger’s fancy as were the gross orgies of the buttery, to which his inviter was probably leading him, yet the offer promised not only shelter, but what was infinitely more seducing to his mind,—excitement.

His soul was like that instrument from which the winds, as they sweep across its chords, draw only sounds of melancholy,—deep and full, or wild and tremulous, but always sad. There is no note of joy in the whole diapason, none that responds to the warm caresses of the sunny south as it lingers on it. When the storm comes, the creaking strings reply moaningly to the blast that passes

over them; their sounds echo the dying breath of evening, and still when the blythe morning air plays on their surface, the same plaintive symphony answers its gay appeal.

In the blank walls and dilapidated out-buildings, turrets, and parapets, where the owl hooted and the grass waved,—even in the more modern part, where the glaring windows looked out upon the neglected terrace, there was much in the spacious building before him to feed the waywardness of fancy. Its walls, discoloured by the double agency of time and atmosphere, were records of the past, and with the past alone did his soul sympathize; the present was for him what the fairy-tale that amused the child is for one of riper years,—it had lost its charm, for he no longer believed in it. He had been in the hollow cell behind the altar, had seen the naked necromancy of the oracle, and for him there was no more illusion; but he was pleased, as far as to be pleased was in his nature, to pass the night in a spot whose old associations tallied with the workings of his fancy.

A gap in the wall with a slight door in it, awkwardly hinged and yielding stubbornly to the hand with a scrape that described a wide semicircle in the clod every time it was pushed open, had, from being used as a temporary issue while the great gate was repairing, become the established entrance to the castle. The traveller followed his guide through this aperture, glided by the kennel, the stable, the dovecote ; then through a low corridor, two or three untenanted chambers whose boards creaked portentously, and as many slips and angles such as our ladies of a hundred years ago loved to decorate with long-necked jars and diminutive tea-pots, calling them china-closets, but whose floors served as preserves for winter apples ; while grapes, gradually shrinking into raisins, dangled in chilly festoons from the peeled walls.

At length, a narrow stair-case dark and winding presented itself ; at the top was a door, which the peasant—taking a key from his pocket—opened, and led the way into a lofty and spacious chamber, gravely and somewhat sparingly furnished, and on whose darkly panelled walls hung numerous heavy gilt frames elaborately wrought ; some inclosing dusty and time-stained mirrors, others

an ancient portrait, a faded flower-piece, dead game, or a boar-hunt. The rest of the furniture was of the same age and fashion,—a bed like the third Richard's war couch, marble consoles supported on carved brackets, panels and floors of oak black with age, and the heavy andiron—for the tongs had no partner—reposing within the capacious chimney.

An old print of Madame de Montespan as Venus, surrounded by an atmosphere of loves, and one of Madame de Grignan after an enamel of Petitot's, rested on the lofty chimney-piece as if they had been novelties just unpacked, and not yet handed over to the gilt nail. But of all modern luxuries there was a total dearth; no round table, or square table, or book table, easy chair or foot-stool, soft rug or psyche; no moveable toilette rolling forward at a touch, and shedding the light of its illuminated branches on the large pure mirror; nothing in short to flatter indolence, or administer to vanity.

Such as it was, the proud dimensions of this chamber still bestowed an air of dignity on its faded ornaments. The traveller swept it over with a hasty glance, and then looking down on

his own shabby and soaked attire, smiled significantly.

“What does it matter?” said his guide, as if replying to an observation. “My garb must have told you that I am no exacter of toilette etiquette.”

“I am no exacter!” repeated the traveller mentally, while he considered for a moment the figure before him.

It was tall and spare, the eye quick and penetrating, the smile frank, the accent educated; a careless stoop of the shoulders, and a pleasant gibe of the lip, counteracted the effect of a naturally aristocratical bearing, which was further softened down by a peculiar friendliness of tone and manner. Old habits and odd ones, had thickened the cambrick thread without making yarn of it; but the traveller's glance had not dived beneath the drugget; he had been looking one way and his thoughts another, and the difference between a coarse man and a coarse garb had escaped his observation.

The supposed peasant was evidently the master of the house, and the stranger, while his host struck a flint against his gun-lock and lighted a candle at the sparks, would have apologized; but

the lord of the castle, who was much more amused than offended, good-humouredly set him right with himself.

“ I have been,” said he, “ a courtier in my day, a traveller too, and a soldier ; but I have long thrown it all off,—trappings, staff, and arms, and have taken, with altered fortunes but an unbroken stock of cheerfulness, to the forests where my ancestors hunted the wolf with fine-mouthed dogs, trained by musical speech and cadenced voices. Ah, in those good times, even Maine and Anjou might have envied the woodland symphonies, the sonorous breathings of the early horns to which these old hills echoed, and Burgundy the grape whose juice sparkled in the deep wine-cups when our forefathers pledged each other joyously, ready for amity or strife as events turned, gallant warriors, bold hunters, or ‘preux chevaliers’ according to circumstances ; while I their unworthy descendant sow corn in the hunter’s track, plant vines in the field of tournaments, send my grain to market, turn my grapes to base account,—in short make farming my employment, and the chase my recreation. My peasants are attached to my garb ; a tree of liberty, a chapter on equality would be less effective ; my

clod shoes and coarse garments pass for virtues ; according to their mode of spelling signs, there is both heart and soul in them. Here, I am ‘le bon père ;’ in the world, the Count de Mortemain ; but I visit it seldom now. I once lived much in society, and thought I could not live out of it, but use does wonders.”

“With the outward man every thing,” observed the stranger.

“And with the inward one too,” returned the count, “at least in most cases. For myself, I came to my solitude unwillingly ; but I would not quit it now for a field-marshal’s staff, or the portfolio of a prime-minister. Some of my family, however, are not exactly of my opinion. When you have reposed a little, I shall have the pleasure of presenting you to my wife and sister ; in half an hour we shall sup.” And then with a few words of courtesy, he left his guest to turn to the best account he could, the scanty wardrobe contained in his light knapsack.

This done, the traveller looked round and, taking at once to his gloomy chamber, thought within himself how he could best contrive to remain alone in it with his sad musings,—the sole society

congenial to his blighted heart. There was still a little daylight in the sky, though not enough to penetrate lower than the hill-tops; but a faint moon was rising that somewhat helped it, and seemed to protract its stay beyond its natural hour. A side window, at which he stood musingly, opened on a projection of the forest that rose abruptly before it; and his eye—ever in search of sombre objects, was at once arrested by the dark rocks and darker trees that waved moaningly over them.

He had once loved softer scenes,—soft happy vales, and meadows with the flowers of Enna brightening on them; but now the gay gorgeousness of nature darkened his mind, his soul was alarmed by its calm splendour; the warbling of birds no longer chimed with the rough gratings of memory, nor the sunny heavens with the rebellious spirit that shunned its light. He sought those scenes which seemed to offer to guilt first temptation, and then shelter,—the lone forest, the caverned shore, the incarcerating mountains, the deep abyss,—those natural prisons that close in upon the mind as the screw-doors of the Venetian prisons do upon the body, jamming in, and discolouring, and at last extinguishing all that

gives tone to the spirit and freshness to the feelings. Light, life, expansion, were hateful to him, because all within was darkness and the shadow of death. Yet he was not a bad, but an injured man,—one most basely cheated, and goaded into reprisal until wrath had become vengeance, and vengeance crime.

If a grand and passionate nature be wisely nurtured, the glory of high deeds, of honour, of genius, encircles it, the blessing of love is on it; it runs its course like a giant, and the applause of man goes with it. Place the same sensitively organized and powerfully endowed mind in circumstances unfavourable to its expansion, wrest from it by education or otherwise the two grand props—belief in God's justice and in man's truth, turn it loose amongst evil things, and its passions will become error or gloom, or both; or perhaps worse wickedness,—insurrection against all that wears the shape of virtue or of holiness.

The stranger—but it matters not. His story—it is a wild and dreary one—has nothing to do with my narrative. Every page of the curious and eventful book of human life has its tale of misused genius, of subverted principle, of error

even while the sense of virtue still exists, of weakness even while strength is yet instinct.

The hoarse growling of the wind in the trees, the monotonous sway of their bleak branches, the coming night, the darkness of his chamber, were all fast ministering to his wild fancies, when suddenly a low sound struck upon his ear; it seemed to proceed from a door which he had not before observed, and which was evidently not used as an entrance, for the bolts had rusted in their sockets.

He drew them back by main strength, and found that it opened on one of those spacious galleries, from which in old-fashioned houses the staircase usually descends; it was vast, lofty, and arched above. The door which the stranger had just discovered was at one extremity, and at the other were two parallel staircases, one at each side, leaving a wide space fenced with a marble balustrade between them, and thus terminating the gallery. Below, these staircases united in one broad flight, and received light from a gothic window of large dimensions in front of the door.

In the centre of the gallery, and exactly opposite to the door, was an equestrian statue of a knight armed from top to toe, the vizor up and a face

peering from under it, to which the preposterous taste of a barbarous age had given colouring. The eyeballs glared sternly, with that false horrid look of life which tells that no life is there; the right arm was extended, the face blank, the posture menacing. Hangings of tapestry, darkly storied, covered the walls; and the dust that lay upon them, as well as other symptoms of neglect, showed that the part of the castle to which the double staircase led, was uninhabited; and yet from its size and air of feudal grandeur, it probably contained the principal apartments.

There did not appear to be any thing more either to excite or gratify curiosity, and the traveller returned to his chamber. He had scarcely time to close the door when his host appeared, and by his kind and cordial manner checked the excuse which hung upon the lip of his guest. They descended together to the family saloon, and the new inmate was presented to the members of the domestic circle.

Supper passed off agreeably. The Count de Mortemain, who had changed his garb for one somewhat more suited to his station, though still of antique cut and unassuming material, did the

honours of his house with infinite urbanity; his simple and peculiar manner rather set off than weakened the effect of his fine sense and high breeding, and gave a pungency to the tone of indulgent philosophy which ran through his conversation. The table was excellent, and abundantly served,—country meats seasoned with town skill, and wines of home growth but rare perfection. Old-fashioned servants in old-fashioned liveries waited on the guests, and seemed authorized to smile at the happy hit, or careless pleasantry; it was a true family banquet, cordially and courteously presided, and cheerfully enjoyed. At length the visitors (three gentlemen of the neighbourhood) took their leave, and the traveller, who was considered for that night as one of the family, alone remained. Suddenly the bell at the outward gate was rung. “Strange!” exclaimed Madame de Mortemain, turning pale, “this is the third night that some one, who never waits to be answered, has rung that bell.”

“Third and last,” said the count cheerfully. “To-morrow I shall set a watch to seize and intercept the delinquent, whoever he may be; and if he does not pay smartly for his frolic—”

“Frolic!” interrupted a voice, tremulous with terror, “do you mean to call this a frolic?”

“Most assuredly,—a mischievous one I grant you, but still nothing more.”

“There I differ from you wholly,” returned the voice, now elevated almost to the pitch of anger. “But you do not think so; it is a mere excuse for detaining us in this horrible house, which we have every reason to believe is shared with other, and awful inhabitants.”

“And yet,” replied the count mildly, “we look cheerful too; our fire burns briskly, our lamps are bright, our table surrounded by happy faces—”

“But without!” interrupted the previous speaker; “who is it that rings without?”

“My dear sister,” said Madame de Mortemain in a sweet caressing tone, “you must not alarm yourself thus. We are not workers of evil, for whose discovery or punishment a visit from the other world might be supposed to be permitted; and we cannot believe that the dead rise from their graves to ring at our gates and frighten our children.”

“I for one am not afraid,” cried a young voice in a loud key, with a tremor at the end of it.

“Nor I either,” said another in a stouter tone.

“Nor I,” echoed a third boldly. “I only wish that you would let me out, and I should soon bring you word whether the ghost wears a plain frill, or double ruffles.”

“To-morrow evening,” returned the count with a smile, “we will anticipate our nightly visitor; and when we have caught him, your aunt shall decide upon his punishment.”

“At Paris if you will,” replied the lady. Then added with warmth, “My dear brother, let us go; we are wretched here,—I am at least. Nothing can ever make me think that a human hand rings that bell.”

“Go to bed, my children,” said the count. They received the embraces of their parents and retired.

“Now that they are gone,” he continued, turning to the traveller, and without appearing to notice his sister’s remark, “I must explain to you, sir, who may perhaps think the conversation which you have just heard somewhat singular, that this castle of ours enjoys the reputation of being haunted. My wife and myself being (he added good-humouredly) what are called philosophers,

have not the gift of ghost seeing; and feeling attached to our forests and our antique abode, and very sincerely believing that we with our family are the only tenants of—”

“What, my brother!” exclaimed Madame de Verzac, “have you forgotten the great staircase? I would as lieve lodge in a charnel-house, as suffer what I have done for the last three nights.”

“Nor shall you suffer it longer,” said her brother affectionately. “Should my meditated experiment fail, I promise that the night after the next you shall sleep at Paris. For the present, I will place you in your sister’s chamber with a guard of honour, and I myself will keep watch in the hall beneath; for, to speak truth, I begin to suspect that if this be not, as I have said, an idle frolic, it may have some design in it more substantially mischievous than the cabals of spirits.”

“O, if it were only flesh and blood, I should be as brave as you are; but believe me, it is a more awful visitor even than the howling wolf or the nightly robber. Sir, (addressing the stranger,) it was no later than last night, that two voices whispered together outside my chamber-window, and that window forty feet from the ground; and while

they talked, a woman laughed from a corner of the room, where there was neither visible being nor possibility of concealment. Is it not dreadful that such things should be, and any living soul be forced to suffer the misery of their neighbourhood? My women will not go to bed; they pass the night by the fire in my chamber, having first blocked up the door with a heavy chest, to which they turn their backs lest they should see a spectre rising from it. I have banished mirrors, the shadows that passed over them were so frightful. I have sent away a screen, because something shocking,—an arm—a hand, once raised itself above it.”

“What a horrible state of mind!” said the stranger gravely.

“Horrible indeed!” returned the count, “and more so even than you can imagine. Think of the terrors over which daylight has no power. If a hawker of country wares stops at my gate, my sister bolts her door and cries out from her window, ‘For the love of heaven, send him away! do not let him enter! who knows what he may be?’ Yesterday a pedlar from Alsace opened his pack to tempt the servant-girls. Had it been Mesmer himself—”

“O, do not speak of him!” cried Madame de Verzac; “ill-luck attends the mention of his name. You have no doubt heard of him, sir?”

“I have heard him named,” replied the stranger, “but I think he was before my time.”

“And will be after,” said she hastily. “He is of all times.”

“You speak, no doubt, of that Mesmer who lived long amongst the people of the East, and learned their secrets; of him who, it was said, conversed with the dead; who dwelt with the cormorant and the bittern, and made his habitation with the screech-owl and the dragon. I have heard of him in the Levant, where the belief went that he was the Wandering Jew; at Venice they held him to be one and the same as that Signor Gualdi, the renowned magician, or more probably alchemist, of whose story they have strange records. But these are idle dreams. Mesmer is,—that is I should deem him to have been,—nothing more than an unhappy man whom despair, and travel, and some knowledge of the occult sciences had rendered mystical; a man wrenched out of society by unlawful violence,—crushed, trampled on, and driven by oppression to share the den of the outlaw,

and forget the heart's charities in the unnatural solitude, or more unnatural companionship, into which he had been forced by the despotism of injustice."

"An elevated Cagliostro," said the count, "but with this difference,—that the one was an impostor, the other probably under the influence of mental delusion."

The traveller was silent. A long pause ensued, when turning abruptly towards the count, he said, "May I inquire how long this castle has laboured under its evil reputation?"

"Not more than twelve mouths. About so long ago, my eldest son, who had just entered the army and was in garrison at Strasbourg, stumbled on a book of demonology, belonging to a student who dabbled in profane knowledge. Being of a deeply imaginative character, all that has a colouring of mystery takes strong hold of his mind; and among many tales of darkness, one—owing to local circumstances—so fastened itself upon it, that he was tempted to transcribe it from the book for the purpose of sending it to me;—an unlucky communication, for since that hour, my house has been set down as the scene of the ghostly legend."

The traveller expressed a strong desire to be

permitted to see the manuscript; to which the count assenting, Madame de Verzac rang for her women, who instantly made their appearance, each bearing a thick wax candle, lighted, and accompanied by Madame de Mortemain, quitted the room.

None now remained of the social circle but the traveller and his host, who having piled fresh wood upon the fire drew closer to it, and opening the manuscript read as follows:—

“There still exists in the province of Champagne, in France, a castle of great antiquity, though modern fashions have partly changed its aspect, and which, in the old time of the civil wars, had been the scene of many strange events and deadly tragedies. Particular circumstances had estranged its owners from their native land, and its only inhabitants at the period of which the story now about to be related treats, were a farmer and his family, who looked after the lands and occupied a corner of the castle.

“It might be about thirty years ago, that, things being as now described, a person of singular appearance came late one evening to the

castle gate, and rang the bell. The farmer himself opened it, and admitted the stranger, who was on foot and alone; and he having entered the house, and finding it to his liking, proposed to the willing husbandman that he should lodge him for a few nights, and counting down an exaggerated recompense, shortly after retired—as it seemed—to rest.

“The chamber which the unknown visitor had chosen, was a spacious one, opening on a gallery that communicated with the rest of the house by a staircase leading to the lower apartments. Near to the foot of this staircase was a door, and when that door was barred, it seemed to cut off all intercourse with any other part of the building. So thought the stranger, who having carefully examined the bolts, fastened them with caution, and securing the door of his chamber, believed himself safe from human intrusion. But he had overlooked a narrow issue which led from an obscure corner of the gallery to a back stairs terminating in a sort of passage, that conducted to a remote apartment occupied by some part of the farmer’s family.

“In this family there lived as servant a young

woman, who had been always remarkable, even in her childhood when, like another Genevieve, she watched her master's sheep upon the hills, for her dark and daring spirit, her simple yet inquiring credulity, and serious faith in all that was wild and marvellous. In time of peril and dissension, she might, like Joan of Arc, have believed herself ordained to fight or prophesy ; but as it was, she was such as humble circumstances and want of knowledge had made her,—bold, curious, visionary, with a memory that teemed with tales of fiends, and ghosts, and necromancers, and a firm belief in all.

“She had spelt the countenance and listened to the speech of the unknown man long and attentively, and while so doing became suddenly struck with the thought that he was, if not himself a foul spirit, at least one of those dark men to whom—having paid the deadly price—all unholy things are familiar. Thus thinking, her curiosity became so strongly excited, that she resolved to gratify it at all risks ; and when the stranger considered himself as shut out from the neighbourhood of eye or ear, she had ascended the narrow staircase, and stood at the door of his chamber with her face glued, as it were, to the panel.

“ Two voices spoke within : she held her breath. They talked together in an unknown tongue ; one was the voice of a woman, a strange voice with a mocking laugh in it. She looked through the keyhole ; a figure in a nun’s veil stood near a table : she saw the hand raised up and the wide sleeve fall back from it, but nothing more, for at that moment a rush to the door showed that she was discovered.

“ She fled,—steps followed rapidly ; the tramp of a horse, the pawing of hoofs were heard. She gained the narrow staircase, the door at its head closed after her ; the key was on her side, so that it could not be opened from the corridor. She stopped to take breath ; it was but for an instant, but in that instant the stranger had descended the great staircase, unbarred the door which separated it from the rest of the house, and was in the midst of the farmer’s family when she rushed in pale and breathless, her lips dry, and her wide open eyes stony with terror. On first entering, he had looked round as if he sought for something ; yet when she appeared he did not seem to notice her, but lighting his lamp, which was the pretext for his untimely visit, quitted the chamber.

“The young woman, though a bold spirit, was mastered into silence by her dread of the stranger’s power, and at the time said nothing. It was true that, to the eyes of others, he had not seemed to mark her entrance, but an unearthly look which he had cast on her in passing, while he pressed a finger against his closed lip, had sunk into her soul, and carried terror with it; but in the night, her courage returning, she disclosed what she had seen to a child who slept with her, first binding it down to secrecy. On the next day she fell into a stupor from which she never woke again, and the people of the house remained impressed with admiration of the stranger’s humanity, who had himself administered to her (in the absence of medical aid) various drugs, in whose properties he appeared to be entirely skilled, and kept assiduous watch by her bedside until all was over. An apothecary from a neighbouring town, who arrived too late to be of use to the deceased, approved of all that had been done, complimented the stranger on his skill in medicine, and pronounced the young woman’s death to have been caused by an attack of apoplexy.

“No more was said until the day when the corpse was borne into the church and placed on a

bier before the high altar, in order that the usual rites might be performed previous to interment; when suddenly a rumour rose and spread itself throughout the assembly, that the deceased had come to her death by foul means.

“None knew whence it came; there were no persons present but the peasants of the village, besides the priest and servants of the church. No stranger, no gossips prone to idle surmising, with whom it might have seemed possible for the report to have originated; yet there it was, and one whispered it to another, and murmurs arose, and voices swelled it into certainty. A tumultuous crowd removed the body from the church; it was opened, and proofs of poison were found within it.

“Then sprang up another rumour, and in the same mysterious way, spreading itself without voice. Some said the corpse itself had spoken, others had heard the sound but knew not how it had come to them, but all cried out that the stranger was the guilty one; and the child, who had as yet said nothing, being tongue-tied by fear, now disclosed what the deceased had revealed to her. So the people forced open his chamber, and seizing on him, conveyed him to the prison of the

neighbouring town, where upon trial clear evidence of his guilt appearing, he was condemned to suffer death.

“While he was in prison, a woman visited him often; and it was said that she who did so, was human only in shape, for she was there when none could tell how she entered, and when they would have questioned her, she was gone. Voices too were heard in his cell at night,—strange voices; and yet none of this world could be there, for the bolts were strong and the jailor vigilant. When the last day came, the same woman was seen alone in the crowd, with her nun’s veil pulled over her face; and as she passed, she was heard to say in a muffled tone, ‘Is he come?’ But none could tell her features through the hood which covered them; nor could any one approach near enough to touch or speak to her, for while you heard the rustle of her garment, she was gone.

“When all was over, the body, as is usual in such cases, was left with the executioner to be thrown into the common grave of such as die by the law, when a woman in the habit of a nun appeared in the place, (it was a solitary outhouse adjoining the dwelling of the executioner,) and

claimed it as that of one who was near and dear to her,—her betrothed, she said; and on one who was near her observing that she who was the betrothed of a celestial bridegroom could have no earthly spouse, replied, ‘He who says so, knows nothing; the dead bought me at the price of life, and even the life that was in his body has not paid his debt.’ The executioner, who saw the gold in her hand, found her reasoning good; and she, having counted down the purchase-money—doubling what was asked, bade him and he who was with him begone, saying that she would watch the corpse alone till nightfall, when others would come and help her to carry it away.

“ Suddenly strange noises were heard in the air, and shouts, and struggling, and voices as in mockery or anger; then softer sounds, as if of sorrow or persuasion; and last of all, a wild overflowing chorus, swelling out tremulously, and strengthening as it rose into a song of joy,—yet not perfect, but as if still wrestling for a triumph; some calling, others answering, with a conflict and thronging of voices, and a lifting up of sounds as though louder voices sang above them, while the air rang with the music of millions of bells, and they who

listened heard a rush downwards as of many wings, and saw a great light in the heavens.

“ And then again there was silence, and those who were in the outhouse looked round in amazement ; but the nun was gone, and the gold likewise. So they interred the body, and marking the sign of the cross upon the grave-stone, returned marvelling to their homes, and told their children and their friends the strange things which they had witnessed.

“ And as a farther testimony to the truth of this narrative, there still exists the likeness of the woman, which it may be is yet in the castle. He who painted it paid dearly for his temerity ; he had seen her when she bargained with the executioner, and, as some said, at other times, and had set her down according to his recollection. But he scarcely lived to finish his work, and while he did paint upon it, his mind turned to gloom and his body wasted ; none knew how he came by his death, but his corpse was found at the bottom of the Wolf’s Pool, and Christians who pass that way at night take care to say three Ave-Marias and one Pater-Noster before they approach the spot.”

Here ended the manuscript. The traveller, who had listened with profound attention, made no comment, and the count at length broke silence by reverting to the ill effects which this legend had produced upon the mind of Madame de Verzac, and on the members of his family in general.

“My sister,” said he, “and her women, had no sooner laid hold of it, than they decided that my good castle of Mortemain was the identical one described in the manuscript. ‘Here, (they cried,) is the staircase, the vast chamber opening on it, the narrow corridor, the steed—the tramp of whose hoof was heard; in short, every proof which local evidence can possibly furnish.’”

“In circumstances where the imagination works alone, and with intense power, reason has no longer any influence. My sister’s brain was hissing hot, it forged shapes of fire; and my arguments, which had nothing more than common sense and the ordinary course of natural events in their favour, were pronounced trivial. She had lighted the torch, and the flame spread like wild fire; my servants revolted against the great staircase and the small, refusing to pass by either even in the day time; and if a dog howled, or an owl hooted,

some awful consequence was looked upon as inevitable.

“A man, who had come through the forest at nightfall, declared that he was pursued by something in a female shape, even to the gate of the castle: he had seen it plainly, he said; it looked like a desperate woman in a bad dream. Another had heard what he called false voices, singing behind the arras; a third had seen a woman sitting at night upon the steps of the entrance-hall, covered from head to foot with a black veil; and, worse confirmation! a torn canvas, on which was traced the likeness—as those who saw it fancied—of the Veiled Woman, was found amongst some rubbish in a corner of the very corridor already designated by superstition as the one described in the manuscript. And there it may still remain, for none present at its discovery dared to touch, or even approach it.

“I caused the stairs to be shut up, and condemned that portion of the building to which it led as uninhabitable; for the tide of opinion had set in so strongly against me, that to have erected my single self in opposition to its force would have been idle. For awhile things went on more cheer-

fully, and I began to hope that the fiend and her lover were almost forgotten; when, three nights ago, just as we rose from supper, some one rang the bell at the great gate.

“In our solitude, and at so late an hour, the sound was unusual. It was answered instantly, but there was no one visible. Last night the same bell was rung, and with more authority. The gardener was on the spot, but saw nothing; he looked up and down the only path by which any thing human could have escaped, but there was no trace of living footstep. To-night the same sound has visited us, and at the same hour, and you, sir, have witnessed the consternation which it caused.

“My wife still holds out, but I dread that the contagion of my sister’s fears is fast reaching her. My sister was firm, too, once; has supported long imprisonment, the approach of death under a horrible form, and all the rigours of extreme misfortune without shrinking; but the dead from the grave! or the belief in their visitations—which is the same thing as far as the influence of fear over the mind is concerned, overpowers her strong spirit, and subdues it into weakness. Tangible

danger she has faced boldly, but her eye dares not look into the vague created by her imagination."

"The case is not a singular one," said the stranger thoughtfully. "I remember an Egyptian of Memphis who—but his story is a tedious one: this we all know, that the same man who has led on a forlorn hope has been seen to tremble at the moaning of the wind; and when he has kept watch at night on the battlement, has imagined that the hollow blast was the sound of the dead trumpet, or the neighing of the coal-black steed on whose back sits the knight whose vizor is never down, who rides always to the east, and neither stops or turns.

"And who says," he continued with a strange dilation of the eye, "who says that the dead come not? Is it you, sir? By the garment of the Nazarene, I believe you wrong!"

The count stared, and the thought crossed his mind that he had given shelter to a madman.

"Can you pretend," continued the stranger vehemently, "to say who stands beside us, who sits in that chair, who fills the space which seems to you empty? I tell you that you have visitors

whom you dream not of, and that your sister's wanderings have more reason in them than lies in your philosophy. Poor lady! she was grand in the tribulations of the world; there were partakers, and lookers-on, and recorders, but the people of the grave mock at glory. Pain, death, oppression come in the course of nature, or are inflicted by the power of man; they are known and expected ills; the mind measures them from the base to the summit, the eye compasses their dimensions, but no eye goes down into the grave, none see what passes in the sepulchre."

He paused a moment, while his host remained silently and anxiously watching the changes of his countenance; then taking a light from the table, moved slowly towards the door, when the count, stopping him, said,

"Before you go, sir, I wish to tell you that the chamber in which you have already been is the interdicted one. As it is not my wish to procure a voucher for its tranquillity by taking advantage of your ignorance, I have given orders that another should be prepared for your reception."

"Thanks, sir, for your kindness," returned the traveller; "but I should have begged that room

of you from amongst a thousand : I have slept in chambers that you dream not of. And now, farewell ! and believe that your hospitality to one, who brought with him nothing but his wants, can never be forgotten." He paused a moment, and then added with a faint smile, "I am no magician ; but unusual circumstances, and a singular course of study, have somewhat removed me from the beaten paths of man. Perhaps I may be able to serve you in a way that you reckon not on. Farewell, sir, and may a more holy blessing than mine would be, rest upon your dwelling !" So saying, and without waiting for the reply which was starting from the lips of the count, he quitted the room, and in a few moments his step was heard ascending to his chamber.

When there, he bolted the door by which he had entered, and having ascertained that he was alone, unclosed the window that looked out upon the forest, and stood before it in profound meditation. The night was clear, the clouds flew by on heavenly messages ; but he heeded them not. The solemn pageantry of heaven, the bright and glorious moon, the glittering stars keeping celestial watch in the night season, had ceased to exercise

an influence over his imagination; the book of nature was closed to him; the power that could unlock its stores and revel in them, no longer found aliment in his dark and unstrung mind.

He turned from the window, and drawing back the bolts of the massive door which opened on the gallery, gazed for a moment on the mounted knight whose open eyes seemed fixed upon him, and then proceeded to search for the corridor in which the likeness of the Veiled Woman was said to have been discovered. He was not long in finding it. It was a narrow passage leading off from an obscure corner of the gallery, and without other opening than that through which it was entered, for the door that had once communicated with the winding staircase had been walled up. A heap of lumber lay upon the floor; the traveller removed it, and found beneath that for which he sought—the likeness of the Veiled Woman.

He lifted it from the floor, and placing it upright against the wall, advanced his lamp and examined it attentively. It needed stout nerves to do so, for it was horrible!

It represented a woman in the habit of a nun; a black veil hung over the face down to the lips,

which were pale, and chiselled like an ancient sculpture,—a Medea at the moment of the unnatural deed, or the murderess Clytemnestra holding her breath and stealing to the couch of her victim. A deadly expression lurked about them, an unknown expression, such as the nomenclature of man has no word for. But the eyes! they looked through the veil clearly—awfully, as if nothing hung before them; yet the veil was there—the black veil, with the dark and murderous light glaring through it.

“Immortal Hermes!” exclaimed the traveller, “it is she!—she who, at the unholy and interdicted hour, drew water from the sacred fountain of the Zemzen, and when the whirlwind is in the desert stands beside the highest pyramid, and extends her arms as if in wicked mockery of the great atonement. Lie there!” he continued, turning it down and trampling on it, “and be hid for ever, evil one!”

He returned to his chamber, double barred his door, and lay down to rest. He slept a moment, then waking with a start, looked round him. The chamber was dark, all except one spot feebly lighted by the bickering flame of a small lamp.

Suddenly the barred door burst open; a cold moonlight streamed in through the great window, lighting up the gallery ghastlily. The knight was there, in the midst of the pale light, mounted on his pawing steed, his arm extended towards the door on whose threshold the stranger now stood, and raised his lamp to the face of the statue.

There was a movement in the corridor, a low rustling, a sound of something coming that had not the human step; at the same moment the door of the chamber shut behind him with a loud concussion, as if a mighty gust had forced it forward, and the traveller stood alone beside the horse and his rider.

It was morning, and the sun shone brightly; the birds carolled in the boughs, and the river glided along smoothly and silently as if a summer sky was glowing on it. The count inquired for his guest; but he had gone with the first light of morning. A letter addressed to the count lay on a table; he opened it, and read as follows:—

“The service which you rendered me last night, was far greater than you at the time imagined it

to be. He whom you have served,—perhaps saved, would fain be, in return, of what use he could to you, and to your kind and virtuous family. When your sister spoke fearfully last night of that mysterious man whose name she hardly dared to pronounce, she little thought that he who sat beside her was Mesmer ! that Mesmer whom persecutions, such as man never before endured, have driven almost beyond the pale of human nature.

“Receive my thanks, and rely on what I now tell you. Never again shall viewless hands toll at your gate, or other sounds than familiar ones be heard within your halls. Open your doors, remove your staircase, change the face of those chambers which fear has placed under the ban, break up the knight and his steed, and let the sound of joy be heard once more in your dwelling.

“Farewell ! you have nothing to dread but from man,—the natural enemy of his species. Man, instinct with destruction, is the common foe against whom we must all combat ; but of the dead—no more.”

The count mused, re-read the letter, and doubted whether it was a visionary who raved, or a sage

who counselled; but the advice was good, and he followed it. The doors were thrown open, the staircase removed, the face of the apartment changed, the horse and his rider sent to the foundry, and the sound of joy was once more heard in his dwelling.



A N T O N I A .



A N T O N I A.



Oft her father's halls
Magnificent among,
She, now so mute, had sung
Full many a lovely air,
In maiden beauty fresh and fair ;
And with the warbled music of her voice
Made all his joyous bowers still more rejoice.

Symmons' Eschylus. (Agamemnon.)

Peregrina e sola
Come dolente e disperata andrai,
E per camin nessun saluterai.

Sannazaro.

I KNELT on the vigil of the Assumption in the church of Saint Stephen at Genoa. It was the shut of evening, and the crowd had departed; three or four devout persons alone remained absorbed in prayer,—they were of the aged poor, who have no other comfort.

A single lamp burned before an obscure altar, and the image of Mary of the Angels rested on it.

My veil was turned back ; I had thrown it off, for my heart was oppressed and I wished to breathe freely. At the same hour, and on the same holy eve, she whom I had so dearly loved expired in my arms. O, what a first sorrow was that for a heart, which had never known a previous one ! Dear and gentle mother ! I thought your blessed shade hovered over me. I looked upwards, my soul sought you in the heaven above. Just then an exclamation, in a language foreign to my ear, broke upon me. I started, and my eyes met those of a stranger fixed steadfastly upon my face, with an expression of pleased surprise that embarrassed me.

He stood within the railing of the altar, as if to view the glorious picture placed above it ; the curtain was withdrawn, and the priest, whose office it was to show it, dwelt with rapture on its power and splendour. But the eye of the stranger was turned from it ; his voice assented, but wanderingly, and as if he knew not to what. I cannot tell how I observed all this, for I had covered my face and removed to a distance as soon as I had become sensible of his presence.

While I rose from my knees, the priest pointed

out another chapel, urging him to look upon its riches; but he answered in Italian, and in a voice which dwelt long upon my ear, refusing courteously, and adding that his limited time obliged him to confine his admiration to one sole object. I delayed a little, while he moved lingeringly towards the porch; the priest lifted up the curtain under which the stranger passed, and then saluting him with a respectful air, returned to his duties.

I knew not why this incident made so lively an impression on me; it was but one glance, one sound, yet my recollection of his look was perfect. I should have known it in another world,—and the voice,—and even the fall of the footstep.

I felt ashamed of having been seen alone and unveiled, and sat down near to the entrance of the church to compose my thoughts a little; then recollecting that the Angelus had ceased, and that if I tarried longer it would be night before I could reach my home, (I who had never before left it unaccompanied,) hastened forward. My kind Giudetta had gone that evening to perform some charitable office in a remote quarter of the city, and I had stolen out unprotected to pray to her

who had left me behind in an unknown world, and to tell her how she was loved and mourned.

As I descended the steps a man stood near, who when I had gone a few paces from the church seemed to follow me. Timid by nature, and rendered more so by my solitary mode of life, I became frightened; and while I hurried on tremblingly, felt my strength forsake me as the sound of his steps approached nearer. The man, who was a person of the middle class of life, passed me, staring boldly; and then repassed, and continued following. I believe he spoke, but my increasing terror prevented me from hearing distinctly.

As yet my way had been through a peopled street, but now a narrow foot-path lay before me, walled on one side and with a line of deserted gardens at the other. I looked round; my persecutor was close to me, and smiling dreadfully. My heart beat with audible violence, a cold dew stood upon my forehead; I breathed with difficulty, and my knees knocked together. At this moment I had reached a church, nearly at the entrance of the dreaded pathway; the door was open, a lamp burned before the altar. I made an effort to enter it, intending to ask the protection of some devout

soul, if any should be still lingering within, but my head grew giddy, my feet slipped, I sunk against a column, and the next moment felt myself supported by some one who tried to raise me from the pavement.

While I struggled to disengage myself, the door of the church was fastened from within, and the last hope of refuge lost! O the horror of that sound! I have suffered much since, but the mortal agony of that moment is as fresh as ever. I would have screamed, but my voice was suffocated in my throat; I gasped for breath, I clung to the pillar,—there was a noise of persons struggling together, a dragging of feet on the pavement, and then some one fled; I heard the retreating footsteps.

Suddenly a voice—I thought it was the stranger's—came upon my ear; I listened: it spoke again, bidding me fear nothing. It was his! O with what joy I heard it! I knew not why I put my trust in him whom I had seen but for a moment, but I did so fearlessly. He raised me up, and in a little while I was sufficiently recovered to walk homewards with his assistance.

It was quite dark when we reached the garden that enclosed our dwelling, but I knew it by its

perfume of orange-blossoms. Giudetta had not returned, and Mariana sat within the trellised porch, with her lamp on a stone table beside her, watching for us. I did not ask the stranger to come in, but he entered with me; and learning from Mariana that she was alone in the house, courteously begged permission to remain and protect us until my friend, or our old gardener Luigi, who was also absent, had returned.

Giudetta arrived first—in a few minutes after me, I thought—but not (as she said) till more than half an hour had elapsed. She was surprised to find me with my veil on, standing in the porch with an unknown person beside me, to whom I, who had never spoken with any other man than the good Father Anselmo and our old gardener, seemed to listen with timid pleasure. I told her all, and in the fulness of my heart spoke of my terror and of my deliverer with a courage which nothing but gratitude could have given me.

He was distressed by my acknowledgments, calling them unmerited; but more so when Giudetta, after warmly thanking him for having rescued me from the frightful peril into which I had fallen, asked suddenly, and with her searching

eyes fixed upon me, where we had first met. I knew not why I felt guilty, but I did so, when I answered in a timid voice, "In the church of Saint Stephen."

It was the first time that I had passed the threshold of our dwelling without Giudetta, and her countenance instantly assumed an expression of severity that it had never before worn. I could not bear it; but throwing myself on her neck burst into tears, and told her through my sobs that my heart had been so heavy after she had left me in the early evening, I had thought so long and so fondly of my mother, that it would have broken if I had not gone into the church where I had last prayed beside her. I would have told her, too, that darkness had come upon me unawares, and all that had crossed my mind on first seeing the stranger, for I had forgotten that he was present; but she pressed me to her heart, and would hear no more.

At last we all became more composed, and Giudetta prayed the stranger to partake of the grapes and figs which were placed upon the table. He sat down with us, and I could see that there were traces of tears on his eyelashes. The glare of the lamp fell upon his features; Giudetta started in

visible emotion, but quickly recovering herself, continued to converse with him until the moon rose; and then she pointed to it with a serious and expressive look, and said, "It is time that you should go. May peace be with you!"

"May I not come again?" he said, in an agitated and entreating voice.

"No more," she replied firmly. "This child (looking at me) has no parent,—no protector on earth but myself. My love for her mother surpassed the love of woman; she died in peace bequeathing to my care this sacred deposit. We live here alone, and never go out except it be to fulfil our religious duties, or perform such offices of charity as religion enjoins; but even in our close obscurity we are not below report. Our humble neighbours respect us for the purity and inoffensiveness of our lives; were a person of your appearance to visit here, a.....Need I say more?"

"No, madam," said the stranger, interrupting her. "I understand and respect your motives; but deeply lament—" Then stopping suddenly, and approaching the spot where I stood, he said something—I did not well know what, but thought it was a wish for my happiness. A strange ringing

in my ears prevented me from hearing distinctly ; I felt that he took my hand, but he was gone, and I heard the heavy gate swing after him before I knew that he had left us.

Giudetta blessed and bade me good night with more even than her usual tenderness ; but the next morning her manner was serious, and she seemed buried in thought. For myself I found the heat oppressive, and walked out upon the terrace on which the windows of my chamber opened. From this terrace a footway, that led through the vineyards from the town to the sea-shore, was visible at some distance ; it was but little frequented, and only by the neighbouring peasants. I had never seen any other persons there ; but this day a figure passed repeatedly, and often stopped and looked towards our dwelling. It was he ; no trace of his features was discernible, but I could not be mistaken. I placed myself on a seat behind the vines, that fell over the front of the terrace and formed its leafy roof ; slight stone pillars supported that roof in front, after the fashion of the terraces of Genoa, and between the pillars were vases full of orange-trees, pomegranate, and the interwoven foliage of the dark-leaved jessamine, which con-

cealed me entirely from view. Giudetta came and went frequently, but did not appear to give any attention to my movements. I wished her to have questioned me, because concealment weighed upon my heart; but she did not, and I could not be the first to speak.

Four weeks passed away. Every day I visited my terrace at sunrise, and again at noon, finding it fresh and balmy even in the hottest hours;—the same figure was always visible. I used to watch it till all around me was in shade, and then I sat and looked upon the sea and upon the heavens, and found a pleasure in those dreamy moments that nothing else had ever given me.

I have often wondered since that the alteration in Giudetta's appearance did not sooner strike me, but my mind was full of other images. It was one evening, as we sat together on the terrace,—now my paradise,—that looking on her face, I felt a sudden shock at seeing it strangely altered; it seemed more aged, and her eyes had a sad and unaccustomed look. An indescribable emotion seized me; it was a look that I remembered in my mother's eyes when she used to gaze upon me, knowing herself that she was soon to leave

us, though I knew it not. "Dearest Giudetta," I exclaimed, overcome by the sad recollections that rushed to my mind, "dearest friend! you too are not going to forsake me!"

She looked alarmed, but quickly recovering herself, said calmly, "Never, my child, while my presence can be useful to you."

I certainly had no distinct apprehension of misfortune, but the solemnity of her manner, and the alteration in her countenance, awakened a vague dread of something painful; a shadowy fear that groped in the dark, and could not find its object. Had I been aware of the whole extent of the evil which threatened me, I should have met it with more courage; but to be pursued by a dreaded but unknown something, without shape or dimensions, was frightful.

That day, and for the first time since my fatal visit to the church of Saint Stephen, Giudetta went out alone, telling me not to quit my chamber during her absence. I obeyed her injunctions scrupulously, closing the blinds of the windows that looked upon my terrace, and occupying myself mechanically: it was all that I could do. It was late when she returned; she seemed harassed and

fatigued, but instead of reposing, talked of having much to occupy her time, and fondly embracing me, left me once more to my fears.

I did not see her again till we met at our evening repast two hours after the usual time. We sat in silence: my friend seemed violently agitated, and my heart fluttered like an imprisoned bird. At length she took my hand and pressed it affectionately, saying at the same time and with visible emotion, "Antonia, you know how dear you are to me, how entirely every thought of my mind, every prayer of my heart is for your happiness: you will not then doubt that what I am about to do is the result of mature reflection, and the most anxious love. This night we leave Genoa."

"Leave Genoa!" I exclaimed; "quit the spot which holds the tomb of my mother! O never! Who will watch her grave, or pray by it, when I am gone? And the house where I have lived with her—and the room—that room!" I meant the chamber where she had died, where Giudetta and I had often prayed together. I could not name it then, my heart was too full; but she understood my meaning, and wept with me. It was long before she could bring me to reason, but her gentle

steadiness and the reverence which I felt for her at length prevailed. In all this time I thought but of my mother, and he who had so long divided my mind was quite forgotten. Alas! forgotten only for a little while, to be again too well remembered

—II.—

It was not yet day-break, when we quitted the only home of which I had any recollection. Luigi and Mariana (they had been my mother's servants) followed us in tears; the lonely light still burned in the watch-tower, but the stars were extinguished. A greyish melancholy dawn faintly developed the objects around us, while thick vapours lay heavily on the waters, confounding sea and sky together.

We embarked in silence; our vessel was a small trader bound for Marseilles. There were no other passengers on board, and I sat upon the deck stifling the tears to which I dared not give vent, lest my Giudetta should be grieved at my sorrow. My head rested on her shoulder, and as I strained

my eyes to discover through the grey of morning the well-known cypress whose shadow fell upon the grave of my mother, a red ray kindled in the west, and threw its light upon the vineyard ; all around was cold and shrouded, but that spot was bright. Our sails were spread, but the wind shifted, and as the vessel tacked about to catch the breeze, we approached nearer to the shore ; near enough to inhale the perfume of the orange-groves, near enough to see the same figure pacing slowly up and down the vineyard pathway, and stopping every now and then in front of our deserted dwelling, but never turning towards the sea ! A cruel light seemed to break upon me. I had never asked myself the question, “ Is it to look upon our dwelling that he comes ? ” I had never reflected that we were surrounded by neighbours, or that in the cottage adjoining to our garden lived Barbara Sada, whose beauty was the daily theme of Mariana’s story. A moment before it seemed as if my unhappiness was incapable of increase, but this was a rent in the heart. I felt my dream of hope withering, and knew then how dear it was to me.

The idea too of having exposed myself to derision haunted me ; I blushed at my vanity, and

wished that fate had made me like Barbara. Then I tried to recollect her face; and though I had seen it but once, and then imperfectly, yet it seemed to come upon my memory distinctly, and like that of an angel. I had never read a romance; my ideas of female beauty had been imbibed from the legends of the saints. I imagined that she must have the golden hair of the holy Agnes, and the pure and star-like eyes of Saint Catharine. Everything seemed now explained,—and too clearly. Had it been me whom he had thought of, he would have sooner found out that I was no longer there; he would have traced us to the shore, his eyes would have sought us on the sea; but there he stood, still looking on the gardens, as if the treasure of his heart were enclosed within their walls.

But garden and grave, my terraced home—now mine no longer, the sweeping bay, the gorgeous palaces, were all soon alike invisible. The form of Barbara Sada alone remained before me, and so beautiful it seemed, that I wondered at the egregious vanity which had induced me to suppose that one of poor attractions like myself could have been thought of near so perfect a creature. The sailors placed pillows for us on the deck; and when

I had at length wept myself to sleep, I thought that she lay upon the waves beside me, mocking me with her bright smile, and pointing backwards to the vineyard pathway.

For three days we sailed along the purple shores where the palm rises, and the olive-groves lie upon the hills like blue vapour. At length we reached Marseilles, and found ourselves in another land, but with the sky of Italy still above us. That same evening, as we sat in a trellised balcony, looking at the stars, and thinking—not talking—of our distant home, I suddenly found courage (knowing that my blushes could not be seen) to say, “How pretty the young girl was, who offered us fruit this morning as we landed.”

“Yes,” replied Giudetta, “her beauty was striking.”

“Yet not so striking,” said I, “as that of our lovely neighbour, Barbara Sada.”

“Not so showy,” she answered, “but infinitely sweeter and more engaging. Barbara is a vulgar beauty; robust, well made, and blooming, but without either grace or expression. She is unquestionably handsome, but her beauty has no charm.”

“ Ah,” said I anxiously, “ do you indeed think so? I have often wished to be as handsome as Barbara.”

“ You!” exclaimed Giudetta, and an incredulous laugh followed the exclamation. It was a joyous sound, and I laughed too, though I had spoken in sober seriousness.

I had always dearly loved Giudetta, but I think never so dearly as at that moment. O, how quickly my fancy returned to its illusions! how quickly did my heart discover that no vulgar beauty could have interested his! I did not exactly inquire whether I was myself the person likely to do so; but Barbara certainly was not, and that conviction was enough for happiness.

We did not stay long at Marseilles; my dear friend was anxious to get to Paris, and all places were alike to me. But how cold and sunless, how vast and gloomy did that great city appear when we entered it on a drizzling day, and thought of the blue heaven and sunny hills of Italy! I looked out from our dreary apartment in a dark, narrow, and (I thought) interminable street, upon the

opposite houses, and felt how much more melancholy it was to live alone in the world than in the desert. Genoa had been to us a desert; we had held no communication with any but the poor and ignorant, had no friends, no acquaintances; but then we saw nothing from our terrace but the sea and the vineyards, and the broad skies where the sun shone out alone, or the stars kept silent company; we knew nothing of household ties or fond relationships, but all that we looked upon was familiar to us; we were solitary but not strangers; we were alone, but we did not witness the fond communings of others. But there—in that great city, crowds passed, friends met friends; the cordial greeting, the affectionate though trite salute, was given and returned; few went or came but spared a word or a moment to a neighbour or acquaintance. We had none to welcome us; we were strangers!—dreary word, that means solitude in the midst of crowds, and in the joyous spread of kindly feeling meets nothing that will own kindred with it.

But confidence is the instinct of the young and inexperienced, and the sorrows of a heart with the quick pulses of sixteen beating in it, are not eternal. I had felt poignantly, I had sincerely believed myself

the most wretched creature in existence; I had even loved my grief, and felt angry with myself when I found it fast giving way to the delightful sensations of that exulting age, when the mere consciousness of existence is positive happiness.

We soon left our melancholy quarter, whose hollow bustle had sounded to us like the dreary action of the coming and going waves that make no home with the rocks they beat upon, and established ourselves in a distant suburb, where we occupied a cheerful apartment looking on a garden full of spring-flowers,—streaked crocuses, early polyanthus, budding lilac, and dwarf tulips in their quaint bed, edged trimly round with sweet-savoured herbs, or violets that under the shade of the cherry, or the purple tree of Judea, put forth as many flowers as leaves, and charmed the eye with their blush of new-born beauty, their tender and unaspiring sweetness. The only inhabitants of our house were an elderly woman of devout and retired habits, and a young person who acted as our servant; three large acacias, planted before our windows, promised to screen us with their beautiful foliage from the heat of the summer sun, and while we waited for its genial influence, the

dome of a neighbouring church, and a few scattered cottages with their little gardens just bursting into bud, looked in upon us through their open branches.

Almost worshipping as I did—and with higher feelings than those of earthly adoration—the blue mountain in its distance, or the nearer one in its severer majesty, it seemed to me, at first, as if a timid and common-place nature such as we now looked upon could have little charm; but its calm crept into my heart, its simplicity soothed me like a prayer; I found in its humble but still renewing beauty a symbol of quiet hope, to which my mind gradually attached itself. I delighted in our cottage and its little garden, and though I sometimes wished that it had hung upon the side of a mountain, yet I soon found myself loving its hedge of rosemary, and wild barberries, and the large white convolvulus that tangled all sweet and budding things together, almost as dearly as the stuated walls of my own Italy.

In this humble retreat I found constant occupation, and with it happiness, the faculty of fixing my mind on simple cares, and engrossing it with placid duties. We never went out but to church,

or to walk in the garden of a neighbouring convent. Our servant purchased whatever we stood in need of, and we seemed to have always sufficient, not only for the supply of our simple wants, but for the modest comforts to which we had been accustomed. Giudetta sometimes wrote a few lines to the person who (as she told me) undertook the management of her small fortune, and twice she received the visits of a stranger, who came apparently on matters of business; more I knew not, nor did the subject of our means of existence ever cross my mind for a moment. We drew and worked, nursed the flowers in our garden, and read aloud alternately, and in the evening we sat in our balcony telling stories of the past, and singing old airs and barcaroles, worthless as music, but dear to us because they breathed of Italy. But I could think of Italy now without tears—at least of bitterness, and when the leaves and flowers were out, and that every bud diffused sweetness, I *thought*—I dare not say I *felt*, that I regretted nothing but the grave of my mother.

One evening, as we returned from vespers, two persons passed us; they seemed to seek their way, and turning back, inquired something of Giudetta;

they spoke in a strange tongue, but she answered fluently and as if accustomed to it. I asked her of what country they were; she said of England, adding carelessly, that she had learned something of the language in her youth, and then changed the conversation. There was an air of mystery in her way of evading any farther question that piqued my curiosity, and made an impression on my mind which so trivial an incident did not seem to justify.

—III.—

About this time an English lady came to live near to us in the house of a gardener, who used sometimes to bring us fruit for sale. She was described as a person of distinguished appearance, an exile through fallen fortunes, and in a state of health which obliged her to depend upon the services of others; yet friendless and alone,—without even the support which feebleness receives from the kind offices of a faithful servant.

My friend was visibly touched by this account; the story of an exile was always sure to interest

her deeply ; even in Italy she would sometimes talk of the grief of living in a foreign land, as if the one she dwelt in had not been her own. Nothing (she would say) belongs to the exile ; at home all is ours : there we feed on sympathy, while the banished die of thought,—thought that never wakens echo or response ! All day long she talked about this foreign lady, sick—perhaps dying—amidst strangers, and wished to be with her, but dreaded lest the strict decorum of English manners might be offended by her intrusion. But when our servant Nanine, who had been sent to make inquiries, returned and told us that she had looked through the half-closed door, and seen the poor invalid extended on a couch, pale as a corpse wrapped in its grave clothes, Giudetta could no longer subdue her feelings, but starting from her seat, quitted the room.

I saw her a moment afterwards pass through the garden, and take the direction of our neighbour's house. She did not return for many hours, and then she seemed so sad and so absorbed that I dared not question her. At length she said, “ Antonia, the lady is very ill,—I think dying ; I must be often with her. Heaven perhaps has

directed her here, that I (of all others !) should receive her last words. But good God ! how awful is retributive justice !” and then she paused as if she had said too much, and was again silent.

For some time Giudetta continued her daily visits to the sick woman, staying long, and rarely speaking when she returned home of the object of her solicitude. During her absence, I sometimes walked out with Ursula Bertin, or as she was usually called, Sister Ursula, the pious person with whom we lodged ; and our steps were oftenest directed to a mean and solitary dwelling in the fields, not far from our cottage, in which three children lay dangerously ill of a fever, while their mother and her youngest babe were slowly recovering from the effects of the same cruel malady. I had been taught not to shrink from the sight of wretchedness, and early accustomed to go amongst the poor of our neighbourhood at Genoa ; but this was such squalid and naked misery as I had never before beheld,—the poor souls wanted every thing. We did what we could for them ; but after a few days it seemed that another, and one with means as large as his heart, had pitied their wretchedness, for all was changed ; decent furniture, a nurse for

the sick, abundant and healthful food, in short every help and alleviation that benevolence could suggest had been provided. It was a worthy person (the poor woman said) who, passing that way, had taken shelter from a sudden storm under their wretched roof; and chancing thus to witness their distress, had himself brought them many comforting and useful things, and helped with his own blessed hands to arrange the beds which his kindness had provided for her children. Ursula, whose life was spent among the poor and suffering, knew how to appreciate the charity which itself administers its benefits; she had seen good people pained by their own barrenness of feeling, their want of sympathy with distress when it wore a disgusting form, and her thin earnest face glowed with pious admiration as she listened. It was doubtless some benevolent ecclesiastic, (she said,) or perhaps the almoner of the archbishop. The woman thought it likely, as he was dressed in black and spoke but little; yet could not say, for the room was dark, and she was too much overcome by surprise and gratitude to mark him distinctly.

While we talked thus, a gentle tap was heard at the door, and the person of whom we were speak-

ing entered, and approached the bed without at first perceiving us. The mourning dress which Ursula always wore, gave her the air of a sister of charity; he took her for one, and bowed respectfully. I stood back in the shade and concealed my face; he did not at first recognise me, but I knew the sound of his footsteps,—knew it instantly, before he had uttered a word. I cannot tell how it happened, but our eyes had met, had acknowledged each other; a token of mutual recognition, a sign of silence had passed, and yet not a sound had escaped us,—not the slightest movement. It was but a look, and that so transient that I hardly could have said that I had seen him. The start which he had given when the form of my large white veil (for I still wore it in the Genoese fashion) betrayed me to him, was unperceived by the good Ursula, who stood wondering that one so young and so handsome, a stranger—and probably a heretic, should be so considerably benevolent.

We returned home as usual,—the stranger not offering to attend us, but following at an unobtrusive distance. As we entered the garden, Nanine came towards us holding out a note; it was from Giudetta: the lady was dying—not expected to go

through the night ; it was impossible to leave her, even for a moment. She then counselled me not to walk beyond the limits of our garden, as a storm was gathering, and bade me tenderly good night. Her absence seemed a respite. I blushed while I made the silent acknowledgment, and while accusing myself of egotism and ingratitude, was yet pleased, in spite of my upbraiding feelings, to be alone.

—IV.—

The evening was sultry ; it was that kind of breathless heat which usually precedes a thunder-storm. The birds nestled in the boughs, hanging their wings ; or, descending rapidly towards the earth, wheeled round in dizzy circles, crossing and re-crossing each other, and sweeping the grass in their wild evolutions with a swift and frightened movement. A light shiver agitated the leaves, as if a quick wing had brushed them in its flight, gusts of sudden sweetness and showers of light blossoms filled the air ; but suddenly it became heavier ; the boughs waved sluggishly and by fits,

as if agitated by an internal power,—a breath that sprung up and died away within them ; a scent of sulphur mingled with the fresh perfume of the earth, and a few large drops fell slowly and heavily, sending up the dust in the garden path in little eddies, and breaking on the light leaves of the acacias with a soft and plashy sound.

I stood watching the varying lights and changeful heavens, when Ursula, who was easily alarmed, came to fasten the windows ; and while she was thus employed, a boy, who sometimes worked in the garden and who had access to our house, brought me a basket full of roses. As I took the flowers to place them in a vase, he gave me a letter ; it was carelessly folded, and I rather saw than read a few words traced upon the open part. I thought it was for me, but those few words told me that it was addressed to Giudetta ; they told me more,—a secret, and that the dearest and most precious that heart can tell to heart.

Time has since passed away,—sorrowfully or happily ; years have gone by, chequered—as years always will be—by tears and smiles ; hope and disappointment have had their turn ; but that moment—that first moment (perhaps the sweetest

of existence) has never left my memory. I could no longer doubt that I was the object of his affection, *the beloved!* Precious conviction! which the purest heart may garner up amongst its innocent treasures.

When my eyes first fell upon the paper, the idea of a secret communication alarmed me dreadfully; but my heart was relieved by finding that he did not seek concealment. I placed it in my bosom, intending to give it to Giudetta when she returned; but night came on, and she was still absent. A line from her explained the cause,—the lady was dying; her agony had been long and cruel, but life yet lingered, though scarcely marked by the faint beatings of the feeble and intermitting pulse. I was deeply touched by the image of this death-bed scene; it pursued me in the midst of my fresh and blossoming hopes. All night the storm raved, and as the winds howled in the heavens, and noises like the clattering of arms or the bursting of deadly artillery were heard in the air, I thought of the passing soul whose hollow knell was tolled out so awfully.

I enclosed the note to Giudetta, with the detail of all that had passed in her absence, for I felt the

necessity of perfect candour ; and then slept like a happy child, with the new toy upon its pillow. Mine was the flowery *to-morrow*, and I closed my eyes thinking how sweet it would be to wake to its enjoyment.

When I rose, the wind had subsided ; it was a fresh and balmy morning ; a gentle air agitated the flowers and shook the rain-drops from their perfumed bells. The sun looked out gaily upon the glistening landscape, and the inhabitants of the neighbouring cottages (chiefly market-gardeners and their families) were scattered about, industriously repairing the mischief caused by the tempest of the preceding night. I too strolled out, to see how my orange-trees (for I had three, and loved them better than all the roses of my garden) had borne it, and there stood Ursula talking with the stranger. I was close to them before I knew that he was there ; and when I did, it would have been rude and childish to have turned back,—at least my heart said so.

Just then Ursula recollected that something in the house required her attention, and quitted us abruptly. We remained for some time silent, he standing outside the low honeysuckle fence that

enclosed the garden, and I within it. At length he spoke; I think I did not answer him, but he continued timidly yet earnestly to urge his suit, and to entreat an interview with her whom he believed to be my mother. It was Giudetta's voice that interrupted him; I heard its sound as she approached the cottage, and hastened to meet her; but first we said adieu! adieu until to-morrow. Ah, who can say "until to-morrow!" Who can tell what chance may lurk in that brief space!

My friend was pale, and seemed worn out with watching; we embraced each other, as if our separation had been one of years,—it was our first. The lady was no more. It was an awful scene, Giudetta said, an appalling death-bed! and then, as if hurrying from the recollection, "But you wrote to me, my Antonia, (she added;) what have I done with your note?—O here it is; they gave it to me in a terrible moment, I had quite forgotten it. But what is this? a foreign hand?" O how I trembled! I dared not look at her,—but I heard the paper rustle in her quivering fingers; a moment after she rose in extreme agitation, and quitted the room.

In half an hour Nanine brought me a folded

paper, on which was written, "Circumstances relative to the unfortunate person whose death I last night witnessed, will occupy me wholly for some hours; remain within doors, and refuse admittance to any one who may call. To-morrow all shall be explained."

—V.—

And the next day, as we sat under the shade of the acacias, Giudetta pressed my hand tenderly, and turning her eyes, red with weeping, on me, said, "Events have lately occurred which induce me to change a resolution formed under other circumstances. As yet, dearest Antonia, many events connected with your mother's story are unknown to you; I believed, as she herself did, that it was needless, and would be perhaps unwise, to overcast the sunshine of youth with mournful recollections. You were told that your father was a man of noble birth who died early, and knew that your mother, overwhelmed by grief and wasted by ill health, had withdrawn from the world in the spring-tide of life; that sorrow had consumed the

germ of existence and sent her to an early grave, where we alone—we two—all that remained of friends or relatives—mourned over her.”

My convulsive sobs here interrupted Giudetta. For a few moments we wept together ; then making an effort to recover herself, she thus continued :—
“ So far you already know ; but you are not aware that your father was an Englishman.” I started. “ Be composed, my love, (she said,) and I will tell you all. It is a dismal story, my Antonia, and I would fain have spared you the sorrow of hearing it, at least for some time ; but circumstances no longer allow me to remain silent.

“ Your mother was the only child of a noble and wealthy Venetian, and allied to most of the patrician families of that ancient state. Her father, a man of letters and distinguished attainments, had in his youth visited many countries, and been in intercourse with the most celebrated characters of various nations. He had acquired in the contact of society a liberal mode of thinking, and a delicacy of tact which made his conversation eminently delightful, and drew round him the élite amongst those strangers of distinction who at that time thronged to Venice from all parts of the known

world, for Venice was then the world's wonder ; the learned, the curious, the studious, and the dissipated, congregated there. The languages of Cairo and of Bussora, of Greece and India, were spoken in her streets ; many English came, and were the guests of your grandfather, for he loved their country, which he had visited in his youth, and he loved its people,—its brave free people, as he used to call them.

“ The fame of your mother's dawning beauty was soon buzzed through Venice. She was, at the time I speak of, in that lovely age when the awakening mind first begins to light up the pure countenance, giving the charm of mental feeling and the mutable graces of expression to features still full of the innocence of childhood. At that period the ladies of Venice were deemed pre-eminent in loveliness ; in every town in Europe where a string was touched, or a moonlight echo awakened, the dark eyes, the graceful movement, the shy sweet glance of the Venetian girl were sung to the notes of the tender lute, or the lighter melody of the soft guitar. But when Antonia Loredano appeared surrounded by the brightest beauties of the day, all were effaced. It was not that her fea-

tures were more perfect than those of her companions, for many might have served as models of symmetry; but that a charm distinct and individual was diffused over her whole person, a blush of freshness, a perfume of beauty, which the eye saw and the heart acknowledged, without exactly knowing in what look or movement it dwelt. Others were young, fair, graceful, but none looked as she did; the character of her beauty was so purely original, that I do not recollect to have ever seen any picture or person that in the least resembled her, yourself alone excepted. Sorrow and sickness had tarnished the splendour of her loveliness when you were old enough to have remarked it; yet you must remember how beautiful she was even then, and how her tender melancholy smile, and the blush that always accompanied it, sunk into the heart. A woman of the lower class,—a sinner,—whom she had persuaded from error, once said to me, ‘Why does she smile? She has no right to do so with her broken heart. When she smiles, I weep; and yet it does me good. I feel as if an angel whispered, ‘Annunziata,—thou art forgiven!’

“But I dwell too long on early remembrances.

About this period, your grandfather, Count Vicenzio di Loredano, being obliged to quit Venice for some time, placed his daughter as a temporary inmate in the convent in which I was then a boarder, wishing that during his absence she might be under the immediate protection of his sister, who was the lady-abbess. Thus we became acquainted, and almost immediately familiar friends.

“ That convent ! O, how fondly my heart still lingers on the happy hours passed within its walls ! how distinctly I can even now remember every post and stone, every carved window and gothic niche of the narrow piazzetta, of which our dwelling occupied one side, and our church another, and the four small trees in the centre, that we called a grove, and talked of its shade and foliage. The lone canal, too, black and sluggish, on which the song of the gondolieri was but rarely heard, clings to my memory ; and I still see the ancient lady, whose casement fronted our church, and who every evening when the Angelus tolled slowly, unclosed her window, and kneeling in front of it on her small velvet cushion of faded crimson, turned her pale imploring face towards the crucifix carved above the portal, and prayed as if the sorrows of

the world had left her but one hope, and that one in heaven.

“My mother, a lady of ancient family in Dauphiné, had married one to whom she had been dear from her childhood,—a faithful lover and of gentle blood, but of poor fortune. He had toiled much to better it, and after serving in the army with unproductive honour, had laid down his sword and engaged in commercial speculations. Success seemed at length to repay his exertions; he was gradually amassing a respectable fortune, and lived in humble happiness with the wife of his heart at Venice, blest in each other’s love, yet always regretting (and teaching me to regret) amidst the eternal jubilee of that festive city, the quiet scenes of their youth, the hills and woods, the fields and vineyards of their beloved Dauphiné; and hoping at last to find themselves rich enough to return to the home of their youth, and to buy back the land of their inheritance,—the holy land where their fathers lived,—out of the hands of strangers. A natural and honest hope, but destined never to be realized.

“When your mother and myself first met, she felt (as she has often repeated) as if she had known me in another world: my voice seemed familiar

to her ear, and my face like one that she had seen in her dreams. As for me,—serious and reserved, accustomed only to the society of my parents or the monotony of a convent, and knowing nothing of the world, I looked upon her with admiring wonder, as on something bright and rare, for which I could not find a name; something not calendered on man's tablets, but belonging to angels. I had never fancied that any thing human could wear her look; but the sweet courteousness of her manners, the pure and gentle mind that beamed out at her eyes and spoke in her soft accents, soon dissipated the constraint imposed by the splendour of her mien and high accomplishments.

“A few days' intercourse made us perfectly known and for ever dear to each other; she prized me for my frank heart and true nature, and I loved her for a soul more beautiful even than the form in which it was enshrined.

“It was her delight to talk of England, and to instruct me in its language with which she was perfectly conversant. Her father had taught her to understand and love the dramas of its great bard, the mighty master whose bold hand had

thrown the poet's rainbow,—the double rainbow of thought and fancy,—over the quaint web of old Italian story. How often since in the more agitated scenes of after life have we looked back with regret to those calm hours,—not registered in the catalogue of pompous pleasures, but engraven on the heart.

“Five months passed thus: at the end of that period Count Loredano returned and reclaimed his daughter. She went to exercise the gentle dominion of virtue and loveliness in her courtly home, to lead the stars—herself the brightest—that diffused light and splendour on the gay scene of festal enjoyment; and I remained to dwell on the sweet intercourse, the community of thoughts and feelings that during five short months had so delightfully chequered the quiet by-way of life through which it was my destiny to glide. I did not repine at the contrast; true I was envious, but it was of those who could approach, could serve, could listen to her.

“My friend came often to see me, and to talk of all that pleased and all that wearied her in her new way of life. Ah, how you recall her at this

moment to my mind ! It was thus that she used to look as she sat within the windowed niche of our convent parlour, her arm resting on the small table that stood before us, and her white and slender fingers pressed against her pure cheek ;— it was her habitual attitude. She often talked of strangers from various countries who were received into her father's circle, and at length it struck me that she (without being aware of it herself) introduced their names to bring in one, always mentioned last, but longest dwelt upon. He who bore it was an Englishman of rank, distinguished at Venice for the splendour of his bearing in society, but still more by his high attainments and courteous demeanour. I was certainly the first who became sensible of the impression he had made upon her ; she was herself ignorant of it, and when I hinted to her my suspicions, seemed to awaken as from a dream,— alas ! even then too long, though unknowingly indulged in.

“ To be brief,—your mother's preference created by the high qualities for which Lord Stanmore was beyond all others distinguished, and fostered by that silent devotion which hides itself from

common eyes only to become more evident to those before which alone it seeks to manifest itself, soon strengthened into the deep sentiment which at once decides the character and fate of her, whose sweet and bitter lot it is to have a real heart. She never spoke to me of his rank, his fortune, his success in society, or personal advantages ; but dwelt for ever, and with a dangerous indulgence of enthusiasm, on his fine mind, his quick susceptibility of all that was eminent in art or beautiful in nature, his high acquirements, and above all his deep and passionate sensibility, forgetting that admiration—at first only an emotion—when prolonged, becomes a sentiment which deepens as it feeds, until, like the fly that draws its colours from the flower it lives on, it is itself lost in the object of its worship.

“ The count, her father, cherished the same feeling, and warmly applauded her choice. Nothing retarded the union of two persons, who seemed destined for each other, but the consent of Lord Stanmore’s father, which he seemed certain of obtaining. Indeed, what father could hesitate to receive into his home and heart a creature so formed to confer distinction by her choice, and to

create happiness by her presence? So thought Count Loredano, and certain that she, the adored of all adorers—rich, noble, beautiful, and virtuous, would be welcomed as a blessing, he felt but little disappointment when a letter arrived from England bringing—not the expected assent—but the intelligence that Lord Glenarden had recently quitted that country to fulfil a mission of political importance at some distant court, and that a considerable time must elapse ere an answer could be obtained to the urgent wishes of his son.

“ Your grandfather thought (as I have already said) lightly of this delay. Not so Lord Stanmore; his disappointment was severe, his anxiety restless and unmitigable. He expressed unceasingly, and with all the force of his impetuous and overpowering eloquence, an earnest, an almost superstitious desire that the projected marriage should take place immediately, urging the more than unlikelihood of opposition on the part of his family, and the fear that preyed unceasingly upon him, and filled his soul with the wild dread of losing her whom he loved by some unlooked-for casualty.

“ In an evil hour he prevailed. Your mother yielded most reluctantly; her proud and sensitive

spirit shrunk from the imputation of indelicacy which a marriage thus engaged in seemed to authorize, but she loved and trusted.

“Count Loredano, who felt his health declining, and saw with a prophetic eye the cloud that was slowly gathering over Venice and already darkening her political horizon, hastened the nuptials of his daughter. I saw your father for the first time on the marriage-day ; he had been described to me as something superior to other men, but when I beheld him, I wondered that new words had not been invented to express the effect of his appearance. There was a charm about it, that seemed the visible result of profound feeling and intellectual light ; a look in his eyes and a smile on his lips that carried enchantment with them. And yet at times the smile was touched with something just not disdainful, and the eyes had almost as much of sorrow in them as of love.

“I know not how I found leisure to make these remarks, for your father’s magnificent exterior, his air at once simple and grand, and his kind and charming manners so completely dazzled me, unused as I was to the society of the noble and the brilliant, that I contemplated him rather as a being of a purer world, than as one formed in

man's common mould. Yet sometimes, too, he looked like a rebel angel, whose divine nature had been blurred by the contact of sin and sorrow; and then again there was a bearing so open, generous, and high-minded, that I blushed at having entertained the injurious idea.

“It was thus that my imagination,—long since tamed by experience, but then imbued with the high colouring of monastic romance,—dressed up Lord Stanmore's image; nor could I ever look upon him as one of those downright human beings who work out life with the common implements of mind, battenning on its every-day joys, and content with its coarse contrivances. Still it always seemed to me as if some melancholy mystery hung over him. Alas! a mystery was there, but of a far different kind from that which my young imagination then suggested.

“Month after month passed away, and brought no news from England. Apparently the return of Lord Glenarden from his distant mission had been retarded, for he did not write, and every day continental communication became more difficult and interrupted.

“Your parents were all in the world to each other; your mother’s gentle breath seemed to your father the atmosphere of heaven, her eyes its light, her voice its music; the coldness of his family seemed to affect them but little, but Count Loredano felt it deeply; it festered in his heart. The glory of his life, his joy, his pride, slighted and forgotten! This was a trick of fate of which no prophetic dream had warned him. His temper, even his heart seemed changed; he appeared to think your mother culpable in being happy, and often checked the gentle expression of her legitimate love with a coldness bordering on severity.

“At length a letter arrived from England. Your father opened it eagerly, glanced his eye over it, and immediately withdrew in strong and evident agitation. Your mother trembled, flushed deeply, grew pale, and throwing herself on my bosom, wept as if all her future sufferings had been at that moment revealed to her. When Lord Stanmore rejoined us, the uproar of his soul was still visible on his convulsed features; grief, anger, indignation,—all the dark and stormy elements were there. But his manner towards your mother! *that* was indescribable. It was not mere tender-

ness, it was worship,—the worship of one who sacrificed to his victim. O, with what a look of pity did he gaze upon her ! I could not see that look without tears, and bitterer ones than I had ever shed : the instinct of grief was in them—the certain instinct—that anticipates misfortune with such cruel precision.

“ Count Loredano earnestly urged to see the letter, which Lord Stanmore as earnestly desired to withhold, saying in general terms that Lord Glenarden, (not knowing the angel with whom Heaven had blest him,) had expressed some regret at the difference of religion and country. This slight explanation seemed to exasperate the count, who grew frightfully vehement. Antonia, terrified at his violence, entreated her husband to consent, urging in a low and timid voice a natural dread that the agitated feelings of her father might suggest something even worse than the reality. Nothing could he refuse to that sweet voice ; so he drew the letter slowly from his bosom, and placed it with the deliberation of despair in the count’s hand.

“ I see your mother now as she looked in that trying moment,—her lovely eyes glistening with

grateful affection, her soft form gliding gently from the agitated circle, but pausing to press the hands of your father and of her own as she passed before them. She felt the indelicacy of remaining to hear a discussion which seemed to threaten dissension between those most dear to her, and of which she was herself the subject. I rose to follow her; but she motioned me to stay, and I remained.

“ O, what a scene ensued! that fatal, fatal letter! I cannot recollect the whole of its petrifying contents, but parts ran thus:—‘ Have you told her all? and knowing all, has she consented to confide in you?—she of whose exquisite delicacy, of whose blushing purity your soul seems full? Has she heard the whole of that dark story? and—but all this is idle; she is your wife! a Catholic, an Italian, a foreigner in country, habits, feelings. Is this as it ought to be, my son? for you are still my son, though the woman *whom you call your wife* can never be my daughter—never! never!—as I hope for future mercy, never! And more; I swear to strain every nerve, to take advantage of every circumstance (empowering ones exist) to break a marriage abhorrent to my soul. *Means*

may be found,—you understand me.’ Much more followed in the same strain of indignant violence, mixed with bursts of tenderness, throes of paternal love, struggling with the fury of unbridled passion.

“But Count Loredano,—the wretched father! Pale, speechless, paralysed; the lip contracted, the voice choked, the burning eye-ball! Assuredly when Lord Stanmore placed the dreadful letter in his hands, he must have acted under the influence of temporary insanity; his mind must have been disordered even to madness. There he stood, like the angel of desolation, gazing on the havoc he had made with eyes so full of lurid light, so wild and stormy—But why dwell on this cruel scene? O, that it could be buried with the night that followed it! that both could be effaced for ever from my memory! But no; such things lie too deep in the heart, yet I would not call up their shadows needlessly.

“At three o’clock your father started from the couch on which he had thrown himself, clasped your mother to his breast with frantic tenderness, and calling wildly for air, as if his brain were bursting, rushed through the vestibule to the

terrace that overhung the canal. No one dared to follow him. For one long wretched hour your mother remained on her knees before me, covering her head with the folds of my robe, as if she dreaded to hear even a breath drawn. On a sudden she sprang up, and with the blanched cheek, the glazed and fearful eye of one who had seen something that reason dreams not of, conjured me by looks—for she did not speak—to follow her.

“ I did so. She advanced rapidly to the front of the balcony that looked down upon the terrace and the deep canal, and stretching her body half over the balustrade, tried to search into the darkness below: but it was all still and colourless. Then putting aside her long hair, which streamed over her face, she listened, crying to me at intervals, ‘ Was not that a groan? did you not hear a voice? He calls us! Ah no! it is the wind; how mournfully it howls!’ And then in a tone of agony, ‘ God preserve him, what a night is here! Enrico, my beloved, do you not hear me? Ah, he comes! I see the gliding lantern! Holy Mary—blessed mother—praise! praise! It moves towards us.—No, it is gone!’ Then, as if some

dreadful thought had suddenly struck her, she descended like the lightning's flash to the terrace.

“The dawn was now breaking, a grey and melancholy dawn, feebly scattering the black shadows of night, and showing, but not dispelling, the horrors of darkness. No human sound was heard; all was stirless, soundless, except the water that broke angrily against the gondolas moored at the steps, and the low moaning of the wind. A man slept in one of the boats; we roused and questioned him, but he had neither heard nor seen any thing unusual. Traces of footsteps frequently repeated were visible on the terrace; the same marks were continued down the steps to the edge of the canal; she saw them, and the dreadful idea of suicide instantly presented itself to her mind. A moment more and she would have burst from my feeble grasp, she would have buried herself beneath the waters; but her wild shrieks brought out assistance, and we bore her to a couch, on which she lay for many weeks in an almost helpless state of mental aberration.

“Horrible reports came to us on that fatal day. One who had passed along the canal about the third hour, had heard a groan and then a strange

gurgling, as of some one in the agony of suffocation; but the wind raved loudly, and there was no light in the heavens, so that he was afraid to stop. Another watched in his boat, and just as the great clock of St. Mark's tolled three, heard a sound as if a heavy weight had been dropped from a height into the canal,—first a loud splash, and then a rushing noise like the gathering of waters closing in suddenly.

“Towards evening, a man arrived at the Palazzo Loredano, bearing a letter addressed to your mother, which had been given to him in charge (as he said) by one who was a stranger to him, and who had hailed his gondola from the steps of the Rialto just before day-break. The boatman had not seen his face, it was muffled in his cloak; but he had heard his groans, and pitied him. The note was hastily traced with a pencil, and the stranger had, instantly on landing at Mastre, ordered horses for Padua, and departed quickly, urging the utmost speed.

“Our most pressing dread was now quieted; and the sounds, of which we had heard with

horrible forebodings, were soon afterwards traced to the last act of a deep domestic tragedy, a dismal deed done that night at Venice.

“Your dear, and most unhappy mother, was not then, nor for a long while after this event, in a state to receive the only consolation of which her wretched fate seemed susceptible,—the certainty of your father’s being still in existence. But when her mind had ceased to wander, when her lips, which since the fatal evening had opened only to breathe wild snatches of old Venetian ditties, or utter cries of despair, spoke again the accents of reason, we gave her the note, and it acted like a talisman on her heart and mind.

“From that moment she looked up with a charmed eye; her dreams were bright, her smile exulting, but her young cheek was bloodless; and as she sat, (it was her custom to do so for hours together,) her head inclined forward as if to catch some distant sound, the lips unclosed, the eye dilated, she looked the chiselled image of melancholy listening to the whispers of hope.

“More letters came; your father had arrived in England, he was again in the home of his

youth, had seen Lord Glenarden, had endured the thunder of his wrath, and yet hoped,—hoped as love does when youth is its companion. Others followed,—less confiding, more agitated, but all expressive of the agony which he felt at being separated from his Antonia.

“ At length came one,—fond, mournful, incoherent ; it spoke of the solitude of the heart, and the one, the all-effacing misery,—absence ! and thus it went on :—‘ Dearest of human beings ! life-blood of my torn and wretched heart ! why art thou not here ? When hope is withering within me, I sometimes think that if I could hear my own Antonia speak, or see her sweet eyes looking kindly on me, all might be well. O the joy of seeing thee once more, my wife ! my love ! But come not, I beseech thee come not ! Do not listen to the selfish ravings of despair ; stay, my beloved,—remain in the safe asylum of a father’s home, a happy father, who can watch over the child of his love. I too, thy wretched husband, would guard thee, best and dearest, from all evil things guard thee—but it must not be ! And yet I love thee, my Antonia, as I devoutly believe man never yet loved woman !’

“ A wild and tender farewell followed, a farewell with a whole life of love and sorrow in it ; and then again another burst, another intense struggle between an all-engrossing wish, and a feeling of conscious egotism and apprehended evil. One idea alone however presented itself to the mind of your mother, and on that only one she seized with the ardour natural to her character. Her husband wished for her ; he suffered, and she was not near to soothe him. Her resolution was instantly taken, and almost as instantly acted on ; remonstrance, supplication, the terrors of an angry father’s wrath, availed nothing. She went, anticipating sorrow, but strong in the consciousness of strength ; heart-struck at leaving an exasperated parent, loved and revered even when he poured down imprecations on her head, still she felt that the duty of a wife was paramount to all others. She asked counsel of her heart, and it said,—‘ Go, fond devoted woman ! go to him whose life hangs on your love. Go and console him, if his grief admits of consolation ; and if it does not, share it with him.’ I too would have partaken her danger, have watched, and served, and soothed her ; but my father lay upon his death-bed, and a holier

duty even than that of friendship, claimed the exercise of my cares.

“Seventeen years have passed away since that fair and starlight evening, when in loneliness and sorrow your sweet mother turned from her father’s halls, from the proud palace of her ancestors. O that moment of misery! It is still here, (continued Giudetta, pressing her hand to her heart,) it is here for ever! I see her as she lingered on the last step, her face turned upwards to the closed window of her father’s chamber; never did human creature look so beautiful, or so wretched! And when at last she entered the gondola, and dropping on her knees blessed him aloud, and waved her hand as if she saw him watching her, good God! how dreadful it was,—and then the sound of the departing oars, lessening mournfully at every stroke until it died away into a death-like silence! Often as I have lain awake at night has that dull and measured sound smote upon my ear, and I have listened to it till I have almost fancied it the death-moan of a suffering spirit.

“Those were dreadful moments, fitting precur-

sors of the melancholy year that followed, and in which the fury of Count Loredano's resentment seemed to gather strength from time. Your mother wrote frequently, and every letter that arrived appeared to augment the mental irritation which was fast destroying him. Not that he ever read them, they were torn to atoms unopened; but the sight of her hand-writing, of the familiar fold, the accustomed seal, produced a paroxysm of rage amounting almost to insanity. Of these letters, two (as I afterwards learnt) were addressed to me; but all met with the same fate. One fragment alone fell into my hands; it was deeply sorrowful, touching lightly on the present, adverting often to circumstances mentioned in former letters, lamenting in a tone of bitter grief, but not of accusation, her father's stern silence and utter abandonment,—calling herself the forgotten, and (not remembering that she wrote to another) conjuring him by every thing dear and holy not to continue his resentment,—just, she said, and merited though he might believe it to be towards herself,—to her helpless and unoffending child.

“It was thus, my Antonia, that I first knew of your existence, and my heart swelled within me

when I thought of a being once so caressed, so almost worshipped as your mother was, perhaps alone and full of sorrow, in a foreign land in her hour of danger. The letter did not contain any indication of her place of residence ; it was evident that she had mentioned it in others previously,—it was the last that reached us. A second year elapsed, but we heard no more of her. There was a talk at Venice of another wife ; wild stories went abroad, and a man—he was of Mantua—came there, who remembered to have seen a stately lady of much-talked-of beauty, who called herself that wife ; but more we heard not, and that which we did hear, we disbelieved.

“ Three years went by, bringing with them many changes ; to me, the loss of both my beloved parents, and to the count the total overthrow of fortune. In the political struggles which convulsed his country, all was submerged. New rulers reigned in Venice, and he, a banished man, gathering together the scanty remnants of his former riches, retired to a humble dwelling on the lonely banks of the Adda ; a solitary spot, far removed from any frequented road, and known only to the fishermen and peasants of the neighbouring hamlet.

“It was a melancholy exile, but he bore it firmly. Long-continued grief had subdued the sternness of his spirit into an almost childish softness; daily and hourly he dwelt on his harsh conduct towards his daughter, humbling himself to the earth in self-reprobation. His heart was a well of sorrow, deep and still; but the evils of a revolution, which had reduced him to poverty and blotted out his name from the present records of the land, affected him but little. He resigned himself courageously to a life of severe privation; feeling, perhaps, that misfortune, in which all are equally involved, and in which the personal sentiment of pride finds nothing wounding or exclusive, is easy of endurance. But the grief scars!—they widened daily.

“He went to his cheerless abode, accompanied only by myself and one faithful servant. I could not leave him in his evil fortune,—aged, poor, deeply repentant, and broken down almost to death. In my society alone he seemed to find a little healing for the deep and open wounds of his sad heart. Often have we sat till the moon waned in the heavens, forgetful of the passing hour, while we talked, and wept, and thought of her who was once the joy, the charm, the light of life to us, but who

came no more to cheer us with her voice of love and sweetness. Sometimes a ray of hope,—faint, it is true, as the first pale light of day, but still it was hope,—kindled in our hearts; we thought that Heaven would pity us. But day succeeded day, months lengthened into years, and hope gave way to despondency. And thus we lived, if life that may be called which exists in the past, and has no future!

“One melancholy evening at the close of autumn, as we sat listening to the wind, and thinking how like its moaning was to the wailing of a woman’s voice, we heard the sound of oars approaching towards the bank on which our cottage stood. The count shuddered; it was an unusual sound at night in our solitude, and one that always affected him deeply. At the same moment, a gust of wind blew open the casement; and while I stood before it securing the fastening, I remarked a boat crossing from the opposite shore. As it neared our bank the rowers rested on their oars, and I observed a dim figure standing upright in it, and extending its arms as if towards the window at

which I stood. The light within the apartment made us distinctly visible to the persons in the boat, while they were but faintly seen, and soon quite shrouded in the gathering darkness. I heard the retreating oars, marking (after a minute's silence) the return of the skiff to the opposite shore, and then all was again still.

“ This trifling incident affected me profoundly. I had long been accustomed to associate every object with the image of your mother, and this boat, that approached and seemed to stop, and then returned back to the same shore from whence it had a moment before pushed off, appeared to my sensitive and visionary mind, (enfeebled as it was by moody indulgence,) like something mysteriously connected with her sad story. My imagination became strongly affected. All the next day I watched for the return of the boat, but it came not. The evening was wild and stormy, there was thunder in the air, and the red lightning flashed through the casement ; but as night shut in, the fury of the storm died away, and we heard the wind whistling dolefully in the sedges, and the heavy rain-drops falling from the roof.

“ Presently the sound of oars came upon us as

we sat by our expiring fire. ‘Good God! (exclaimed the count, in an odd hollow tone,) here is the boat again!’ and snatching up a lamp that burned on the table, hurried into his chamber, fastening the door securely within. The superstitious terror with which he was evidently seized, crept into my veins; I remained motionless. Something passed the window,—I thought I saw a human face; I would have screamed, but my voice stiffened in my throat. A soft tapping at the door roused the servant, who sat at work in a corner of the chamber; she looked through the window, and seeing only a single female figure standing within the porch, quitted her work, saying as she left the room, ‘It is neighbour Madelaine, who has brought the yarn.’

“I would have prevented her from opening the door, but she was gone. A minute passed; I could have counted it by the audible beatings of my heart. Agata returned with a folded paper in her hand; I thought the woman followed her, and covered my face, crying out, ‘For the love of Heaven, bolt the door! Who is it? what is it that stands there?’—‘Ah, madam, (she replied,) it is only a poor young woman, who cannot harm

you.’—‘A woman!’ I exclaimed. ‘Yes, madam, and one tired, and sick, and poorly clad, who asks for shelter for the night; and a fearful night it is for a poor Christian woman to stand outside the walls of a fellow-creature’s dwelling. But she says you will know her, when you look upon this writing.’ Know her! O, my heart had told me all! I did not look upon the paper; I folded her in my arms, I pressed her again and again to my bosom. It was long before I could see, or hear, or speak distinctly; but when I became more collected, when the first rush of joy had subsided, O what a tide of recollections burst upon my heart,—crowding together the past and present, the all that had been and still was of life, in its wild overwhelming sweep!

“It was Antonia! my own Antonia! of this my heart assured me; and yet my eyes still doubted. A woman stood beside me of unusual height, and more than earthly delicacy; her cheek was pale as the first cold flowers of spring; a dark and hollow circle surrounded her melancholy eyes, speaking the language of that deep and settled sorrow that feeds upon the springs of life; her hair no longer floated caressingly on her fair shoulders, but was bound

up closely beneath a nun-like fillet; there was no freshness in the finely chiselled lips, nor trace of smile upon them.

“All was changed! a close brown garment of mean materials covered her whole form, leaving only the face and thin white hands visible. Over that poor dress she had thrown a coarse unseemly cloak, and her head was enveloped in the large white veil worn by the humblest class of Venetian women.

“It was thus that she returned to her father’s house,—she who had eclipsed the brightest, whose smile was distinction, voice a spell, and common words an oracle! who, when she moved, was followed by the obsequious worship of the proudest hearts, on whom eyes gazed with wonder, as if the thing they looked upon was nothing earthly, but some magnificent creation of a more perfect nature! Poor, poor Antonia! O, whilst I pressed her cold hands and warmed them within mine, while I dried her long hair, heavy with the rain which had fallen upon it, how my heart dropped blood! If my tears had not relieved me, I must have died. It was the robe, the scanty robe, that the meanest hireling in her father’s service would

have disdained to wear,—it was that which first made my tears flow. I cannot account for it, perhaps it was childish; but when I saw her altered countenance, I was too much shocked to weep; I gasped for breath, but no tears came; it was that wretched robe, and the contrast—the sad, sad contrast. It said so much; it told of poverty, of distress, in a form of abjectness that——No, even now I cannot associate a thing so sordid with her splendid image.

“All night we sat together, telling sad stories that might have moved the coldest or the happiest mind to pity. Often would she interrupt her heart-breaking narrative, and looking round, exclaim with that utter forgetfulness of self which was always chief jewel in her crown, ‘My dear father,—and is this poor cottage all that is left you? Is this the home of your old age? Ah, my Giudetta, what a wrenching off of comforts! and the friends of his life, how sorely he must miss them!’—‘He misses nothing but his child, (I replied;) and when he has once more blessed her, all will be well.’ Then she would smile, and for a moment her early beauty seemed again to brighten in her eyes.

“O that gleam of the past! how sad and sorrowful it is; that light that will not stay, having no heat to nourish it; that passes while the eyes which gaze upon it seem to say, ‘Now you are like yourself again;’ and while the loving heart would fain believe in its sweet continuance, is lost in the mournful permanency of later impressions. That early gleam recalled her days of joyfulness as a portrait does the dead. I could better bear her look of settled sadness; there was still hope in it, for time mellows the grief that, having passed through all its stages, has no more to dread; but that smile! O, so much deeper than tears! It was like the song of one who had gone mad for love, but remembered the voice that had charmed her—charmed and forsaken!

“At length we retired to rest; and when the day broke, and that her soft and equal breathing gave me assurance that she slept, I arose, and hastily dressing, awakened a boy who helped in our garden, and with his assistance unmoored a boat, and was soon on my way to a hamlet lower down the river on the opposite bank. There I received you, my second dear Antonia, from the hands of a kind woman, to whose care your mother had

confided you the preceding evening ; then returning speedily and placing you in her arms, I hastened to prepare Count Loredano's breakfast, already delayed beyond the usual hour.

“ When he joined me, his face was pale, his eye wild and hollow. I believe my countenance betrayed my emotion, for he looked earnestly at me ; and then reverting to the incident of the preceding evening, said, ‘ Did you not hear the oars ? What can that sound mean ? It comes so often, and always in the dead hour.’

“ ‘ It was a fisherman's bark,’ I replied, ‘ from Tremano, that landed a passenger.’

“ ‘ A passenger !’ he exclaimed in an agitated tone, ‘ a woman ?’

“ ‘ Yes, a woman.’

“ ‘ But the night before the same sound came ; who landed then ?’

“ ‘ No one ; she had not courage ; her heart sunk within her ; she went back again.’

“ ‘ She !’ he repeated eagerly, and at that moment an old glove that lay upon a table near him caught his eye ; it was the glove of a small female hand, of a foreign make and a peculiar colour. He gazed upon it for a moment, examined the

form minutely, while the blood shifted in his cheek and his whole frame shook like that of one palsied by age, or terror. Then turning to me with a rapid, breathless, expecting look, but checked by a piteous smile—an old man's smile, that said, If I am credulous and weak, forgive it to my age and to my wretchedness, exclaimed, 'It is my child!'

“The next moment she was on her knees before him, and his aged arms enfolded both his children. It was a day of joy and grief, and many followed of the same rainbow colouring. But time passed on, bringing with it calmer moments; the father no longer mourned over the changed form of his child, and again found a world worth living for in her dear society. After having received from me a slight and general outline of the events which had taken place during her absence, he never made another inquiry; but shunning with the vigilant egotism of old age all that could awaken painful reminiscences, seemed to have forgotten the past.

“Your mother, too, began to smile again,—faintly it is true, but with a placid and relying sweetness that seemed to presage future peace. Her eyes lost by degrees the wild glare, the fixed

and hopeless gaze that used to desolate my heart ; a gentle uncomplaining melancholy succeeded to the ghastly restlessness of fresh grief. The hopes of youth, the heart's dream, were blasted for ever ; but the weight of a father's malediction had been removed, and her beautiful and sincerely believing mind, in which misfortune had served to strengthen faith, found in the consolations of religion, and the sweet exercise of filial and maternal affection, a solace that amounted almost to happiness."

—VI.—

Thus far, with many interruptions from my tears and sorrow, had Giudetta proceeded in her sad story, when a gentle knocking was heard at the garden gate. She looked through the branches that screened our seat from view, and, perceiving the stranger, pressed her finger to her lips in token of silence, and remained motionless. Ursula and Nanine were both absent, and there was no one to let him in but either Giudetta or myself. After a pause he knocked again less timidly,—waited long,

looked up at the windows often and earnestly, and at length departed with a lingering and interrupted step, stopping at intervals, and looking back towards our house, as he used to do in the vineyard pathway at Genoa.

“I shall see him this evening,” said Giudetta, “for it is absolutely necessary that we should have an explanation; but at this moment, I feel my spirits too much agitated to enter upon any other subject than the sad one which has recently occupied us. I have found out where he is staying at Paris, and learn that it is his intention to remain for some time.” I heard this with surprise, knowing that she was unaware of his being in our neighbourhood until my note had informed her of it. But affection is ever vigilant, and in this short interval she had ascertained all that it was essential to her to know.

We sat down again under the acacias, and Giudetta took up the thread of her melancholy story:

“I would not needlessly afflict you, my Antonia, (she said,) by dwelling too minutely on the details of your mother’s sufferings while in England, but it is necessary that you should learn something of the circumstances to which she became a victim.

“It is with real sorrow, with intense regret, that I withdraw the veil from the errors of a man who bore upon him the majestic impress of virtue; who might have been high amongst the highest of the endowed, had he exerted the eminent privilege of an enlightened mind, the great one of example, but who from one sole error became a warning, a strong and melancholy illustration of the evils which may result from a single act of duplicity. From the moment that we have stooped to it, we are no longer free; the dread of discovery pursues us like a spectre; the footstep is always behind, the startling hand touches the shoulder; we shake it off—start forward—grow bold again, and as we do so, feel the breath upon our cheek, and shiver while we expect the word to follow it.

“When Lord Stanmore first beheld your mother, he held in his heart a secret that weighed heavily upon it, and that (fatally for his honour and their mutual happiness) he wanted courage to reveal. He who in all else was open as the light of day, in one instance was criminally secret. The unsullied purity of your mother’s mind, on whose fair tablet the world had made no mark, her sensitive delicacy and ignorance of evil, startled him. He feared

that a disclosure might utterly blast his hopes, and suffered (strange inconsistency of man's nature) a careering passion to roll over and whelm his naturally high sense of honour; weakly thinking that when she was his own, she would know his heart so thoroughly, that hers would forgive a silence not persevered in to cloak dishonour, but to conceal unmerited misfortune. Fatal delusion! faulty and perverse concealment! Who that has once deceived—whatever may be the extenuating circumstances—can ever hope to re-inspire the sentiment of perfect uninquiring confidence?

“The blandishments of beauty, and a father's influence, had combined to hurry Lord Stanmore into an ill-fated marriage before his heart had spoken, or his mind judged. The Lady Almeria Cleveland, then the supreme beauty of the English court, was by a few years his senior, and would certainly never have been the object of his unbiassed choice. But the ambitious and grasping nature of Lord Glenarden found in this alliance a powerful connexion, and immense wealth; and his son learned after a short but bitter experience, that he had paid too high a price for their acquisition,—no less than all his hopes of future happiness.

“ His bride was cold, vain, and heartless ; with feelings, habits, and impressions entirely at variance with those of her husband, whose high pursuits and home tastes she derided and opposed. She was (and piqued herself on being) a creature of impulse—of bad impulse, passing with unbound feet over all authorized limits, and finding right where others saw audacity. To a lofty and sensitive nature, eminently endowed, her conduct was intensely painful. Lord Stanmore tried to work upon her heart, but he could not make it speak, there was no sound in it ;—upon her pride, but that was unfenced by principle, and where the latter is not deeply rooted, all other safeguards are but ramparts of air.

“ To be brief, she proved herself unworthy, altogether unworthy, of bearing an honourable name ; she abandoned her husband and her country, and fled,—none knew whither. Your father, stung to the quick, buried himself in solitude while the customary proceedings were instituted for dissolving his ill-fated marriage. But it is unnecessary to dwell on this subject ; your father found himself free by the laws of his country, and restoring to Lady Almeria the splendid fortune

he had received with her, crossed the sea and sought in foreign travel the oblivion of his domestic misfortunes.

“It was deemed singular, at the time, that Lord Glenarden had never shared warmly in the just indignation of his son, but continued, as far as decency allowed, to favour the lost and degraded lady. But his ruling passions, avarice and ambition, were both thwarted; and he angrily regretted the restitution of her fortune and the loss of that influence which his connexion with a family, then the most powerful in the state, had given him.

“Your father journeyed on, now courting man, and now avoiding him; seeking sometimes in society, but oftener in solitude, a balm for his bruised spirit. At length he came to Venice, and there, at the season of the carnival, saw your mother at a masque held at the Manfrini palace. It was just as day broke, just as the early dawn looked in as if to shame all artificial beauty, that she passed him fresh and blushing like the dewy light of morning,—her soft rich robe touching the edge of the gondola, as she stepped from the marble peron on its velvet pillows, her head

inclined gracefully backwards to catch the playful salute of a girlish hand that waved to her from the illuminated balcony. Never (Lord Stanmore used to say) did the rich fancy of the ancient painters imagine any thing so beautiful as Antonia at that moment; never did lovelier nymph strew flowers before the chariot of Aurora.

“You know the rest. Until the fatal day when Lord Glenarden’s cruel letter separated those true hearts, Lord Stanmore, aware of his wife’s departure from Venice, received her as she landed in England, and in that meeting—that happy, happy meeting, all past sorrow, all future danger were forgotten. Your parents retired to a forest solitude, a hunting-lodge in a green and lonely spot, where your mother remained in voluntary seclusion, not wishing to appear in the world till her marriage had received the sanction of Lord Glenarden’s approval.

“Your father, on the contrary, proud of his bright possession, at first urged her to let herself be seen, and seemed assured that even the stern repugnance of Lord Glenarden must give way before the majesty of innocence and beauty; but too full of the sentiment of present happiness to

overcloud it by an opposing feeling, yielded to her gentle remonstrances.

“ It was during this period of short-lived peace, and while your parents, together in their forest Eden, envied not the bright prosperities of that gayer world, whose distant hum scarcely reached their far-off solitude, that you, my Antonia, were born; and while your mother pressed you to her bosom, all sorrow seemed forgotten in the profound and absorbing tenderness of her new emotions.

“ Yet she was not happy; blest in her husband's love, and in the soft exercise of her newly-awakened maternal cares, still her father's wrath hung like a deadly load upon her. Nor was that her sole affliction; she had another cause of sorrow. Her husband became daily more pre-occupied and thoughtful; some secret anxiety gnawed at his heart, and there were unguarded moments when the workings of his mind were painfully visible through the assumed veil of a feverish artificial gaiety. Something lay deeper than his father's anger, for of that he spoke openly, and often indignantly, as unjust and pitiless; but there was a wound beneath, a something that

refused to reveal itself even to the ear of tried and devoted affection.

“Letters arrived which he concealed from her; of this she became accidentally aware. But knowing that circumstances might arise in the course of a correspondence with his family, which from motives of delicacy towards her he would naturally desire to suppress, she felt no distrust; and when he one day told her in a fluttering voice that he must leave her for a little while, no suspicion arose in her mind, nothing struck upon her heart but the thought of his absence.

“One day,—it was in the third week after Lord Stanmore’s departure, as she sat in her chamber thinking on his long and unaccounted-for delay, and fondly tracing through the forest openings the path which he had taken when he left her, a stranger rang at the gate, and demanded admittance. It was refused; Lord Stanmore (the servant said) was absent, and his lady did not receive visitors. The stranger was importunate, urged business of the most pressing kind, and at length succeeded. Your mother was (as she has since

told me) offended at the intrusion, and bowed coldly on his entrance, but as he advanced towards her, was suddenly struck by the resemblance which he bore to her husband ; while he, starting back in obvious amazement, (surprised no doubt at her unimaginable beauty,) uttered an exclamation suddenly suppressed, and sat down unmasked beside her.

“ In the scene that followed,—perhaps the most trying to which a fond and true heart could be exposed,—heaven no doubt sustained her, for mere mortal energy could not have done it. She heard of your father’s former marriage, but that was a misfortune, not a crime: she heard of his duplicity, and yet sunk not, though her heart was almost torn asunder: she heard that Lady Almeria had returned to England, loudly declaring her innocence, and furnished with abundant evidence to prove it, and invalidate the decree of divorce,—heard it from the father of her husband, and yet outlived the deadly intelligence !

“ Heartless and wicked man ! who could coldly lacerate so gentle a bosom, could see the agonies of a creature so young, so beautiful, so utterly forlorn, and still stab on. A burning fever, a

long delirium, succeeded by a slow and painful convalescence, followed this dreadful interview. It was three months before Antonia's senses were restored: melancholy restoration! Her first thought was of her husband, her heart had already forgiven his deception; she inquired eagerly for him, asked if he had not watched by her in her delirium,—knew that he had, for she had felt the pressure of his hand, and remembered that his tears had fallen on her cheek,—then thought it might be an illusion; but no answer came from those about her; a gesture of pity, a perplexed and evading look, but no reply, not one consoling word.

“At length her attendant put into her hands a letter dated a month before. I have preserved it with other papers of your mother's. Here it is; I will read it for you: ‘My most beloved Antonia—my wronged angel,—how shall I write it? All is over! we are separated for ever! Her claim is established, falsely but irreversibly established! And I, the acknowledged husband of another, can I—ought I—to hope that the wife of my heart, my pure and virtuous—my only loved one, should receive in secret the homage which the proudest heart might call it glory to offer? No, my beloved,

I dare not—would not ask it. Return to make your father's home an earthly paradise,—go, angelic creature! Go, and be a bright example to the other dear Antonia, who must, alas! now look to you alone for protection; and O, forgive the wretch to whose miserable egotism you have been made the victim,—forgive him for the sake of the passionate love he bears you; forgive—and do I live to write it?—forget him,—speedily, and for ever! Giuseppe and Caterina are faithful servants; suffer them to attend you. Farewell, most dear, most injured woman! I dare not bless thee, but Heaven will!

“But these sad details affect you, my Antonia, too bitterly. I shall pass over all that your mother felt, and thought, and suffered on reading this specious and heartless letter, evidently, even to her unsuspecting mind, motived by the base desire of shaking off the unhappy creature who had ventured all on the false promise of his love. And yet how infinitely noble in mind, how deeply devoted in heart, had he always seemed! No, she could not, would not credit even the evidence of his own

words; she questioned all who were about her, and at last left herself without even the melancholy consolation of uncertainty, without even the shadow of a doubt to cling to.

“Once convinced, her high spirit rose up indignantly against oppression; and after the bitter pang, the grief of griefs,—that of being forced to think him worthless in whose virtues she had glorified, of finding coldness and dishonour where she had most fondly loved and most confidently trusted,—she recovered all her natural elevation of character and strength of mind, and prepared to execute the plan which she had decided upon immediately on awakening from the stunning effects of Lord Stanmore’s desertion.

“Her first intention was to quit her husband’s house openly, taking with her nothing of all the gorgeous baubles which his lavish fondness had bestowed upon her, except her marriage ring and a chain of gold, the first gift of wedded tenderness; but she had scarcely formed her plan, when a circumstance, apparently trifling, occurred, which awakened a doubt in her mind as to her personal freedom. Fear quickened her attention, and she soon ascertained that her movements were watched,

and that the domestics especially recommended by Lord Stanmore were placed as spies upon her.

“It was unfortunate that Count Loredano, in a moment of high excitement, should have denied to his forlorn daughter, when she left her home at Venice, the attendance of a faithful servant; but it was his will that none should bear her company in her cheerless pilgrimage, and she, desirous to show in all things not militating against her duty as a wife, her high sense of paternal right, went her way alone: and alone in the sternest sense of the word she now felt herself, standing as she did in the midst of enemies, with no one near from whom to take counsel or hope for assistance, entirely unacquainted with the country, and yet without any chance of safety but in secret and immediate flight. But she trusted in Providence, and means were given her.

“It so fell out that one day, as your mother sat at the foot of a tree, concealed by the brush-wood that grew about it, and musing mournfully on her unhappy fate, she heard the footsteps of persons approaching. They seemed in earnest conversation, and as they drew near, believing themselves unobserved, Giuseppe (it was his voice) said to

Caterina, ‘You are certain that she is safe in her chamber?’

“‘Certain; she lulls the babe to sleep.’

“‘We have lost time,’ he continued. ‘My lord will be here on the eleventh; and if she be not by that time over the seas and on her way to the mountains, we lose our reward.’

“‘God help her!’ returned the woman, in a tone of voice that had a touch of pity in it; ‘Heaven help her when she misses the child! But we must do our duty; yet I wish it had not been a convent, and that solitary one! Why not send her to——’ Here the voices were lost in distance, and the speakers, striking off through a path that led to a neighbouring hamlet, were soon out of sight.

“Confirmed now in her worst fears, Antonia returned homewards quickly and silently, and gained her chamber unseen. She lost no time in vague meditation; her religious principles were strong and true, and from their pure source she drew the hope which sustained, and the mental courage which directed her. To depart that night,—even though compelled to trust herself alone to the host of alarming chances that rose up in drear array before her, was her instant decision.

Yet when she thought of being cast out in a strange land, in the darkness of night, and on an unknown road, her heart quailed; but the appalling alternative! *that*,—and above all, her trust in God,—gave her fresh strength.

“Close to your cradle sat a young female, who had been recently taken into the family to assist your mother in her nursery cares, and whose rustic manner and sheer simplicity were the scorn and ridicule of the more accomplished domestics. Your mother, who was kind to all who needed kindness, favoured the poor girl; first, because she pitied her, and next, because there was something of acuteness in her despised simplicity that amused, and of feeling in her countenance that interested her.

“As she sat revolving the chances of escape that presented themselves, a gold ring of little value fell from her finger. Jenny picked it up, admiring its beauty as she replaced it.

“‘You may keep it,’ said your mother; ‘it will remind you of me when I am gone.’

Jenny took the ring with a curtsy of grateful acknowledgment: then, suddenly approaching your mother, as if to hear more distinctly, said, ‘But you are not going to leave us, madam?’

“‘It is possible, Jenny, that I may soon return to my own country.’

“‘And shall we never see you again, madam?’

“‘Probably never.’

“At these words the poor girl burst into tears, and seizing your mother’s hand, exclaimed, ‘Dear lady—dear mistress,—do not be offended—but—but—I shall never be happy when you are gone. Every one here hates me, and you are so kind—so good! Take me with you; only let me be near you, I will serve you on my knees—I will follow you to the end of the world. Do not, do not leave me behind you!’

“Your mother, touched by this burst of affection, paused a moment. Unaccustomed of late to the language of the heart, the vehement tenderness of the poor girl’s manner affected her sensibly; it seemed as if Providence had suddenly raised up a friend for her in her necessity;—in short, in her forlorn situation, no other choice seemed left to her but to confide in one, whose kindness of heart and shrewd good sense promised the sort of assistance of which she stood most in need. Jenny had a brother,—an honest youth; they were orphans, and clung together fondly, having none else to

hold by. The boy was older than his sister, and had been often in London on business of his master's, who was a tradesman in a neighbouring town. He happened to have called that morning, and was still in the house ; his assistance was easily procured and most heartily rendered, and the best arrangements of which the urgency of circumstances admitted, were instantly made.

“ In a conversation which your mother held with Caterina and Giuseppe in the course of the evening, she feigned (hard task for her) to fall into their snare ; and it was decided between them, that on the next day but one she was to commence her journey,—to Venice they said ; but the lonely mountains, the convent in the desert, the deaf walls beyond which neither cry or call could pierce, and above all the child!—the abducted child ! rose on her shuddering mind and strengthened it to the unusual exercise of deception. The cunning agents of a diabolical plot were overmatched by the instinct of despair ; no suspicion crossed their minds, or ruffled the crouching boldness with which their services were proffered. She would be safe (they said) under their respectful protection,—safe in their devoted attachment ;

and then with many obsequious protestations they left her, as they imagined, to repose.

“An hour after nightfall, your mother, attended by Jenny and bearing you asleep in her arms, descended on tiptoe from her chamber; and passing through a lateral door, the key of which she had contrived—at an alarming risk—to secrete, glided swiftly and silently into a rough wood-path rarely traversed. It was a winding track, obstructed in many parts by long tangled grass, or wild-growing briars; but Jenny, who in the days of her idle childhood used to gather berries there, and knew every branch that bore a nut, and every tree in whose shade the wood-strawberry nestled, led on fearlessly.

“The night was dark and still; a few stars glimmered in the heavens, shedding a dim cold gleam—if such it could be called—through the opening branches; but for the quick breath, the hurried footstep, all would have been silent as death itself. And once a nightingale, that kept her lonely vigil on a high spray, sung out wildly; your mother started, and felt as if the sound was

ominous of sorrow,—the bird, alarmed by the fall of footsteps, hushed its loud gurgle and fled into the thicket. Antonia had felt the silence of the forest, coupled as it was with almost total darkness, as something fearful; but that only sound, that unaccompanied voice, breaking the chilly stillness of night, O, how its solitary cry sunk into her heart!

“After winding for a considerable time along the forest track, they arrived at a meadow terminating in a low plantation, from which a gate opened on a spot where three roads joined. Stationed in the least frequented of these roads, and some hundred paces from the gate, was the carriage which waited to convey your mother from her prison-house,—her Eden once! A high fence divided the meadow from the road, and they crept slowly along under its shade, hidden by the wild vegetation that overhung it. On a sudden, Jenny stopped, looked back, and stifling an exclamation of terror, pointed to the house now visible on its lone eminence above the intervening forest. Your mother’s eyes followed the indication, and beheld with dread unspeakable, a rapid and unusual movement. Lights appeared suddenly in one

window, and the next moment shifted to another ; then the whole front seemed illuminated—torches glared through the trees—cries were heard—then footsteps nearer and nearer ; in a moment the forest seemed surrounded—girdled round with light—and echoing to the shouts of many voices. The poor hunted creatures lay down, crouching under the flimsy covering of the brambles that grew about them, trying to hide themselves from the blaze of the torches that now flared around, and threatened to lay open their insecure refuge. No doubt their terrors magnified the numbers, but there seemed a legion ; and one, (it was Giuseppe,) whose treacherous eyes glanced every where, seemed to have caught a glimpse of some unguarded movement, for he turned half round towards their hiding-place, and Jenny thought he motioned to a man who stood near him.

“ At this moment you uttered a feeble cry ; fatal it must have been, had not the sound of carriage-wheels rolling rapidly onwards instantly turned the pursuit into another channel. Fortunate chance ! Within that carriage was no doubt one who had also cause for haste, for the horses shot forward as if life or death hung on their

speed, striking fire from their flying hoofs, and passing like the whirl of an arrow.

“In a moment all had vanished ; silence and increased darkness spread again over the forest. Your mother started on her feet and fled ; Jenny darted swiftly after her. They ran like deer chased by the hunters ; but the human hounds had followed in another track, and the poor fugitives, half dead and speechless from terror, at length reached the carriage posted to receive them.

“Their route was obscure and circuitous, their horses fleet ; the other carriage—the spectre one your mother used to call it—had taken an opposite direction. All was propitious ; it was early spring and they had still the advantage of a long night before them. Nothing farther obstructed their flight, and before morning they found themselves hidden in the populous obscurity of London.

“The humble lodging to which your mother was directed by the brother of Jenny, answered perfectly the purposes of concealment ; and the honest master of the house was of essential service to her in the disposal of a watch of considerable

value, and some rich and curious trinkets that had belonged to her in her maiden days, and for which he was fortunate enough to find a liberal purchaser.

“Circumstances rendered it necessary to make this person in some degree acquainted with your mother’s story; and he advised her remaining for a short time concealed in London, and then taking a passage in a vessel bound to some Italian port of the Mediterranean, instead of embarking directly for Venice, which could scarcely fail of exposing her to discovery. The advice seemed too reasonable to be rejected, and after remaining for a short time hidden in London, she, with yourself and the excellent Jenny, quitted the country of your birth and the scene of her sufferings.

“Many were the sorrows which the poor Antonia endured in the two long, hopeless years that followed. The ship was wrecked off St. Remo, on the coast of Genoa, and she, with the two companions of her darkening fate, were with difficulty rescued from the devouring element. Some pious sisters of charity sheltered and nursed them with unwearied tenderness; but a consuming sickness wasted Antonia’s strength, and it was long before

she could again pursue her uncheered and tedious journey.

“ And then came the saddest sorrow of all that had fallen upon her in that melancholy pilgrimage,—the loss of her dear and faithful Jenny. The fellowship that had soothed, the courage that had supported her, were withdrawn for ever ; there was none now who could understand, who could *remember* with her; no heart that loved her for her sorrows, or that she could love for its sympathy.

“ It was at Genoa that the spirit of that affectionate and noble-minded woman was recalled. She expired in the arms of your deeply afflicted mother, resigned to die, but yet wishing to live while her life could be useful to her dear and blessed mistress, as she called her with her dying breath. She was the friend of whom Antonia has often spoken to you with tears, and the flat grey stone close to the tomb of your mother covers her mortal remains ; a rose-tree grows beside it. When we came together to Genoa, some years after poor Jenny’s death, Antonia planted it ; and every year when the leaves fell, she gathered and placed them in her bosom, wearing them till the returning season had brought back fresh ones.

“ At Genoa she disposed of a chain of gold of remarkable weight and workmanship ; it had been a present from her husband in the happy days of their early love, the only memorial she had retained of the fond care with which he delighted to decorate his idol, and she wept when she parted with it, cruel as he had been.

“ Italy was then in a wild state of war and tumult ; and when your mother at length reached Venice a lonely pilgrim, faint and heart broken, she found a foreign enemy in possession of the city, her home abandoned to strangers, her friends scattered abroad in foreign lands, her father exiled, none knew where. The misery of utter loneliness was on her in her natural home, in the thronged streets of her native city ; she sank into an obscure asylum suited to her poor fortune, and there hiding herself from the chance of meeting those who had known her on her bright eminence, turned all her thoughts towards the means of discovering the place of her father’s exile.

“ But he was ruined and forgotten. No one recollected when, or where he had gone ; and it was not till after many months of earnest but unavailing inquiry, and in an awful moment, when her

resources were utterly exhausted, that as she sat despairingly, holding you in her arms, on a stone by the river side, near to the poor hut in which she had hidden herself, that a boy who went about the country hawking his rude wares from door to door, offered a bird-cage to her for sale. It had been given to him, (he said,) in exchange for some more useful article, in a cottage many miles up the river. Your mother's heart rose in her throat; the cage had been mine; she knew it by its peculiar form, and by the letters G. M. engraved on a small plate inserted in it. The boy, surprised at her agitation, speedily answered her rapid, breathless questions. A straw is enough for hope to catch at; and that night she was on her way to our lone hut, her desolated heart once more rejoicing as the long-estranged feeling of hope gathered strength within it.

“ She took the boy for her guide, giving him the last coin she possessed for his trouble; and seating you on the poor subdued beast which carried his merchandise, walked slowly by your side. But her strength was much enfeebled, and she was often obliged to sit down by the road-side to rest; so that the first evening they were still, at twilight

hour, something more than a league from the hut where they intended to repose for the night.

“There was a fountain by the way-side which, though broken and defaced, had once been of beautiful form and most delicate sculpture; but nature had outlived art, and the water still fell in broad silvery sheets from the marble fragments on the herbs that grew below it. Antonia’s feet were blistered and weary, so she sat down upon a stone thinking to bathe them in the falling stream; and while she did so, sad thoughts crossed her mind, and for the first time something like a repining feeling mingled with them. For a moment she forgot the father who an instant before had occupied all her thoughts, the child who slept beside her; and thinking only of her husband, wept bitterly, calling herself the most forlorn of creatures.

“Thus mourning, she perceived a woman wrapped in a dark garment, her face covered with the folds of her white head-cloth, who sat upon the ground at some distance. Antonia moved farther off, fearing to intrude on her seclusion, but the woman’s groans and frequent ejaculations affected and disturbed her. She would have spoken to, and comforted her, had there not been something in her

look which, as she sat gathered up within her garments, seemed to forbid approach. Your mother staid some time, and then, having first dried her feet, knelt down—as was her custom at close of evening—to pray. No sooner had she done this, than the woman, rising from the ground, advanced and stood before her; your mother felt chilled, but bent her head lower, and continued her prayer. When she had finished, she rose up and would have passed on, but the woman spoke to her, and she remained.

“‘You have had sorrow,’ she said, while her eyes searched into her, ‘but I despair! You pray; I cannot. You believe; I doubt,—doubt! (she continued in a wild shrieking voice,) O that I could even doubt! If there was no death, I might smile gaily; but can my golden fillets, my gemmed robes, keep him off? Can they hide me from him who lifts up the purple curtains of kings’ tents, though the men with spears, and the men with battle-axes guard the entrance?’

“Antonia shuddered, but pity mastered horror; and taking the woman by the hand, she drew her to the brink of the fountain, and they sat down together. There was a long pause, and while it

lasted, she contemplated the person beside her. It was not, as she had at first thought, a female of the country, but one obviously, by her look and speech, a stranger. Her dark robe was of costly cloth, and her thick white veil of exceeding fineness; she wore rings of value on her bare hands,—not as if she esteemed such things, but as if they made part of her habitual wear; her hands were nobly shaped, but thin and veiny, like those of an aged person, though her face bespoke one of more care than years. It was pale and marbly, yet traces of beauty were still there,—a severe and gloomy beauty, into which bad things had worked themselves, things that Antonia read shudderingly.

“‘You believe!’ she repeated, starting as if from some dark thought. ‘Happy, happy wretch! for the world calls you wretched. I know it; I read it on your young, sad brow. But the world knows nothing; it has not heard of me; it has not heard of her for whom there is no hereafter,—of her to whom the universe is a machine without a Maker,—of her who dreams desolate dreams of howling souls, seeking in dread and darkness, midst rattling bones and foul corruption, the Creator that is not.’

“Antonia started; her eyes shrunk from the wild ones that pursued her. But when she remembered that it was a woman who spoke thus,—perhaps a friendless one,—tears of compassion gathered in them.

“ ‘A blessing on your tears, (she cried,) they are for me. Thank you—thank you, poor thing; for you have your own woes too, they are written in your sad eyes; but look at mine, they are dry. Hear my words, (and she wrung your mother’s hands in hers,) there is more joy in the grief of the believer, than in the unforeseeing lightness of the heart into whose void nothing sufficing enters. The one looks through the bars of his prison, sees the light of the sun, and feels its warmth; the other holds up a lantern to the walls of his cell, and reads what the scoffer has written on them. I am that last, (she added, with a look of profound despair); I am the unbeliever, to whom all is darkness,—darkness with the terrible gleam in it.’

“Antonia tried to speak, to say, ‘Let us kneel and pray together,—God will hear us.’ But she exclaimed wildly,—catching the first words, ‘Kneel and pray! I with the innocent! O no! I too was innocent, but the sacredness of belief was never

with me; and now nothing is with me but despair, —*that* never leaves me. O that I could die, and be like the earth I tread upon !’

“ Antonia’s tears flowed again. She would have spoken, but the woman rose up solemnly, and laying her hand upon her, said, ‘ Whatever may be your griefs, there is a hope beyond them; pray, and be comforted, and if your earthly heart should repine at sorrow, think of me.’ And then gliding through a narrow gate close to the fountain, which your mother had not before observed, fastened it carefully and was seen no more.

“ The impression which this incident made on your mother’s mind was deep and lasting; her heart filled with compassion for the unhappy person from whose intense despair she had received a lesson of resignation and of gratitude. She too went her way, and entering the first church that she saw open, gave thanks devoutly for the blessings that still were left with her, and bearing joyfully the cross of her faith, departed comforted.

“ Your grandfather lived four years after the return of his child, and then died gently in her

arms. We buried him in the cemetery of our village, and wept long and sorrowfully over his grave. Our home seemed sad to us; we saw him every where, and yet he was not with us. It is thus that the heart feels before time has convinced us of the reality of death; so having much to renew sorrow, and nothing now to love in our sad home, we went up into the Appenines, and lived there amongst the shepherds of the mountains.

“Count Loredano had left a little behind him; and a friend,—faithful to my evil fortunes, a kind relation of my father’s, contrived to transmit to me, even in the most perilous times, a portion of the modest income which my parents had bequeathed me. It was more than enough for our wants, and was soon afterwards augmented by a successful speculation, in which the same friend had engaged with a view to my advantage.

“It was there, in that sky and mountain solitude, as we sat and mused upon the story of the past, while the sun went down and the soft wind brought to us at intervals the rude music of the shepherds from the crags above, that a strange thought crossed my mind. I remember well the hour, the light, the delicious colouring of the

heavens and of the earth on that sweet evening ; and the fair and sorrowful creature who sat beside me, telling of heart-breaking gone-by things with the voice of an angel, and the look of one whose heavenly nature had forgiven all human injuries, but who still loved. She talked of that forest glade where she had often wandered with her husband,—of their embowered solitude where they had dwelt in happy companionship with the birds and flowers, and remembered how beautiful it looked when the level beams of a setting sun glanced through the interwoven trees, throwing forward their long cool shadows, and darkening the fresh turf with their living mosaic. And then she spoke of him whom she had loved so tenderly, of him who had forsaken her, of him whom she could never forget. Alas ! the heart never forgets if it has once felt deeply ; the impression may be weakened, but can never be utterly effaced.

“ But this thought of mine,—it had never come to me before ; yet I had admired your father as a glorious creature, who seemed lifted by his high nature above all evil influence, and when it rose on my mind the wonder seemed that it should have awakened so tardily. I asked to see the letter

which had almost broken your mother's heart, the last false, cruel letter. I examined it minutely, pored over every touch and turn of the writing, compared it with many others that she had preserved of his, and felt the immediate conviction that he had never written it, and that it was a base and iniquitous fabrication, got up for the purpose of separating the unhappy Antonia from her legitimate protector.

“The whole truth flashed at once on the mind of your mother. Her husband had been betrayed, duped, made wretched as herself, but he was guiltless! and she dropped on her knees in the ecstasy of a redeemed soul,—her hands clasped, her eyes full of supernatural lustre, thanking heaven for having manifested his innocence, and then weeping bitterly, and wildly upbraiding herself for having ever been induced to doubt it.

“And now came a thousand recollections, thickening into proofs as we dwelt upon them; so we embraced each other as if life had just opened freshly on us, and leaving our mountains, descended joyfully into the valleys, and soon found means of reaching Genoa.

“It was our intention to have embarked there

for England, and to have at once sought out and undeceived your father. We had arranged the means of remaining unknown until circumstances favoured the developement of our plan, and your sweet mother, who had always doated on you, now began to glory in your beauty, and to dwell trustingly upon the anticipated joy of seeing you pressed to your father's heart. But it was not to be; and she, the best and purest of human beings, seemed to have been lent to earth as a testimony to us unjust repiners of a world beyond the grave,—a bright, a happy, a repaying world, and to strengthen by her mental martyrdom our immortal hopes, and intimate reliance on divine justice.

“It happened that when we arrived at Genoa, an English vessel had just completed her preparations for departure, and as the captain expected to sail in a few hours, I went on board to secure berths. While I waited in the cabin, a newspaper that lay upon the table attracted my attention; I took it up, and the first intelligence that met my eyes was the death of Lord Stanmore, son of the Earl of Glenarden! A gentleman present heard my scream of horror, and confirmed the dreadful intelligence; he had left England but a short time

before, and had been present at Lord Stanmore's funeral.

“I heard no more ;—all was now over ! our last hope, that which we had fondly dwelt on, was gone like all the rest which our poor hearts had cherished. It was your mother's death-blow ;—she never hoped again ! and though she survived the cruel shock nearly five years, yet the stroke that broke her heart, fell upon it in that desolating moment.”

Giudetta had little more to add to her heart-rending story. I knew the rest too well ; but I did not know that my beloved mother had ever, after the fatal crisis of her misery, been haunted by the dread of Lord Glenarden's getting me into his power. There seemed no motive for his doing so, but her maternal anxiety created many. For the purpose of concealment she changed her name, calling herself Madame de Vaudreuil, the widow of a French officer, while Giudetta, who had caught the contagion of her fears, passed for her sister under the appellation of Mademoiselle Delmont ; and then feeling her strength decline, and her reluctance to change of place increase to a painful sensation of alarm at the idea of movement,

and having no farther wish on earth but to bring me up in virtuous obscurity, she remained at Genoa, settling in the most retired spot of an unfrequented quarter, and never passing the precincts of our small garden except for the observance of her religious duties; and then she chose such hours as ensured the absence of the stranger, the curious, or the devout of a higher class than the neighbours who surrounded us.

But the rest—the last sad close, how shall I speak of it? Even now I cannot bear to think of the death-bed, the blessing, and the last—last kiss! and how we followed her—who had looked at, had spoken to us, had loved us with her dear warm heart but three days before—to the dark and silent tomb, and left her there alone,—and returned to miss her in her accustomed haunts,—and to be alone ourselves. I cannot—years have gone by, but I cannot dwell upon it.

—VII.—

Giudetta described to me, when I was sufficiently composed to listen, the uneasiness which

she had felt at finding me, on the vigil of the Assumption, in the company of a stranger; and how her heart had sunk when she discovered that this stranger was an Englishman. But other and more substantially grounded fears had quickly obliterated the growing anxiety.

It chanced, that on that very evening Giudetta had gone to visit a woman who lay ill in a distant quarter of the city; and while she staid with her, many who were passing that way stopped to take refreshment, the house being one of humble entertainment for poor travellers. Amongst others were two men who, as Giudetta was departing, sat on a bench beside the door gossiping of Venice. And one who was just arrived from thence, spoke of two Englishmen, then the talk of the moment; they had been to Padua, and to Brescia and Pesaro, and other towns, inquiring earnestly and unceasingly for the daughter of the old Count Loredano, and giving money to those who feigned to know something of her. The man's companion wished that he could share in the spoils, and the other devoutly joining in word and spirit, rose and departed.

A channel of communication with Venice was

still open to Giudetta; she took advantage of it, and soon learned that the stranger, whose conduct had occasioned so many rumours, called himself Lord Glenarden. She looked about for the immediate means of placing me in safe concealment, when she received the intelligence that the elder traveller had taken the route to Bologna. As to his companion, he had suddenly disappeared, and was then (it was supposed) in the neighbourhood of Genoa. This intelligence precipitated our departure; Giudetta's preparations had long been made, and on the day when her protracted absence had excited my surprise, she had settled for our passage with the master of the Marseilles trader, and made the final arrangements for quitting Genoa on the ensuing night. Matters of business relative to the employment of her limited fortune, together with the privacy to be found in a great capital, were her motives for going to Paris, and remaining there.

It seemed as if my friend had now disclosed every thing to me, and yet there was a something still lurking behind. I saw it clearly, but dared not question her,—dared not, because it seemed to me that he whom we called the stranger was con-

cerned in it. She had already talked of the necessity of seeing him again, and had tried to recall his features, asking me if I had remarked the colour of his eyes and hair ; then suddenly exclaiming, as if carried by some urgent apprehension out of her usual prudence, "Heavens, if it should be so!" In the evening she wrote a few lines, and giving them herself to a trusty messenger, waited his return in evident anxiety. At length he arrived, and with the unexpected intelligence that the Englishman was gone ; a letter had been delivered to him in the afternoon, which he had no sooner read, than ordering horses he had hastily quitted Paris.

Giudetta was surprised and evidently affected, but whether painfully or otherwise I could not discover. It seemed to me that a kind of doubtful expression, a rainbow chequering of satisfaction and disappointment, lightened and clouded in her eyes ; but whatever she may have felt, nothing betrayed itself by words. For myself, I heard that he was gone with a pang of sorrow that startled and alarmed me, for it told too truly the secret of my soul ; it was a deep and poignant sorrow, an unlooked-for grief. I tried to conceal my emotion with that bashful secrecy with which

the young heart hides a first feeling, as though it were a base one; while Giudetta talked of other things, and studiously avoided noticing my too visible perturbation, and I looked from my window as if the rose-trees in my garden were all that I cared for in the world.

Just then Nanine brought me a note, left (she said) by a boy, who had not waited for an answer. I knew the writing and gave it to Giudetta, who broke the seal, and running her eye over the paper, quitted the room.

A few minutes elapsed,—hours I thought they were. At length I heard a movement at the door, and a hand placed gently upon the lock. I knew Giudetta's breathing, my heart rose to my lips; it was a moment of intense excitement; it seemed as if my future fate hung upon it. But she approached me slowly, her feelings evidently subdued to the tone of calm decision, and began by saying, in a quiet but determined voice, that the note which she had just received, though intended for my perusal, contained many things with which it was not desirable that I should (for the present) be made acquainted. To speak now of what she felt for me, of the deep, devoted, maternal interest

which filled her heart even to overflowing, would, she said, be idle; so without further dwelling on it, she would merely say that for some time past her mind had been much perplexed by fears on my account,—fears now too fully confirmed; and though it was not possible at present to disclose their nature, yet she felt it necessary to tell me that I had seen Mr. Villiers (the name seemed to have fallen from her inadvertently) for the last time. Circumstances, she added, the most imperative, forbade that we should ever meet again; at some future period she might, perhaps, feel herself at liberty to speak more openly, but not now—not now, she repeated with energy; then added in a tremulous and solemn tone, “Thank God, my Antonia, thank God fervently, that by the warning finger of Providence you have been preserved from a fate, compared to which your mother’s wretched one was blessedness.” The solemnity of her manner awed me, my heart trembled; she clasped me in her arms, the fair visions of my fancy vanished; I burst into tears, and she wept with me.

When I could speak, I expressed my entire devotion to her will, my perfect confidence in her

unbounded affection, and in the course which that affection suggested ; laid open my heart, submitted myself to her guidance, and found my bosom lightened of half its load by proving to her, who had been every thing to me, my blindfold confidence in her wisdom, and my deep and self-effacing gratitude.

Giudetta did not conceal from me that the English stranger had expressed his intention of returning to Paris as quickly as circumstances permitted, nor the necessity which this determination imposed upon us of immediately changing our present abode for one where we should be effectually concealed from his pursuit, should he again return to seek us.

Again return ! I, at least, could not doubt it. I had never known of falsehood till I had heard the story of my mother's wrongs, and could not, even with her sad image before me, anticipate deceit in one whose eyes were so full of truth. My reasoning was the logic of youth, but I thought it irrefutable. I was in the age of belief ; to calculate, and then to mistrust, comes afterwards. Why it was necessary to fly from him, I could not even conjecture ; but I felt, through

the desolation of heart the grief that smote me when I heard of the sudden and indefinite absence of one on whom my thoughts had dwelt too often and too exclusively, a strong assurance that, whether happy or miserable, we should meet again.

It was not until months had passed away, and that the buds had again opened, and the blossoms ripened into fruit, that my heart began to resign its fond illusions, to whose sweet maintenance it owed the honied food which absence loves to live upon. We were now domesticated in the wing of a dismantled château in Giudetta's native Dauphiné. It had once been a scene of lordly splendour, but the revolution had reduced it almost to ruins; and when the day went down, bats held their sleepy revels in the roofless saloons and flitted through the broken casements, striking themselves blindly against the gilt and sculptured fragments of former magnificence. But our corner had still a pleasant and habitable air; after the demolition of the great building, the ancient Concierge had niched himself there with his family; and occupying only two or three chambers, was happy to spare to us, for a moderate remuneration, an airy and agreeable apartment, scantily furnished, but to which,

with the aid of books and flowers, and an old harpsichord discovered in a corner, we soon gave an air of habitation and simple comfort.

It was a spot of lonely but engaging aspect. An untamed forest enclosed it on three sides, spreading its shade and mystery far and wide, but breaking down to the south as if to let in a gentle spread of soft home scenery, closed by a mountain-distance blue and indefinite. It was winter when we first became the inhabitants of this remote spot; the woods had lost their leaves, the birds their notes, but the air was soft and aromatic, and we had sometimes whole days of warmth and sunshine, and gorgeous gatherings of bright southern clouds, that when I looked upon their golden architecture, carried my soul back to Italy.

The novelty of our situation charmed me. The perfect stillness of the scene, the absence of all objects but those natural ones that fasten silently on the heart, and of all sounds but such as accorded with the wild and lonely character of a forest country, far removed from cities and their loud discordance, was to me new and touching; my imagination was affected, and my heart soothed. And when I used to sit, watching the flying lights and shadows as

they passed swiftly over the surface of the mountains, or losing myself in their gradual perspective, or listening to the wind as it piped through the branches of the leafless trees, the sorceries of the imagination worked at will; my day-dreams were as the illusions of magic, things long past returned with all the freshness of life upon them, eyes that were closed in death still looked upon me, and a voice came out of its still chamber to speak to me with a mother's love. It was in such dreams that I might be said truly to live; hope always came with them. I had resigned myself to inevitable necessity, as all must who are not rash enough to oppose it; but when hope seemed to throw out its chances, how my heart sprang after them, leaving patience and reason far behind; in those delicious moments, had the present been covered with the hues of paradise, it would have passed it at a bound.

Many months had gone by, and more had followed them, before I could persuade myself that the English stranger would come no more, that he had forgotten me. For though Giudetta had said that we must never meet again, yet my heart still clung tenaciously, as young hearts will do, to the

hope that would not leave it. In vain I repeated to myself the sentence which she had pronounced ; in vain I said, "He is gone for ever !" For ever ! hopeless and dreary words, the tried heart feels all your melancholy force ; but with the young the *for ever* is a week—a day—an hour,—a privation defined and terminable which the mind runs round.

Every noise that broke upon our stillness seemed to announce the approach of *the expected* ; if a horn sounded in the forest, if the trampling of horses' feet was heard in the distance, if the fall of the wood-cutter's axe sent out its echo, my heart beat ; I looked from the antique casement to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south,—but he came not ! Spring returned and covered the earth with innumerable flowers ; the buds peeped out, the leaves unfolded themselves, the birds carolled on the boughs, the wild deer sprang across the forest glades, snuffing the fresh breath of heaven ; it was a rich free burst of life and joyfulness,—but yet he came not !

Summer passed away : the sun declined in the heavens, the leaves fell in rustling showers, the days became pale and cheerless, and my heart began to conceive the meaning of that sad *for ever* ! I

then knew—and for the first time—how long, how dreary, how unillumined was the future; my soul looked sorrowfully into it, and felt that the perfume of flowers, the morning air, the soft shadows of twilight, the landscape sleeping in the moonbeams, no longer filled my heart with pure and perfect pleasure. The spell was broken, and I slighted the cordial offerings of nature; for he whom I looked for came not!

—VIII.—

We were still in the season of winter, and as we sat one wild bleak evening by the flitting blaze of a wood fire, listening to the moaning sound that breathed out of the piled logs as if an imprisoned voice sang mournfully, a strange heedless fancy crossed my mind. I did not give it time to mature, but suddenly looking towards Giudetta said, with a childish inadvertent earnestness, and a courage that did not naturally belong to my timid character, “Ah, Giudetta! you talk of trees and flowers, and wish for summer that the old oak may again give its shade to our antique seat, but that

oak is not like the acacias of our suburb dwelling. Do you remember those acacias? and our rose-trees, and the honeysuckle fence of our little garden? (Giudetta seemed surprised,) and how beautiful it looked when *he* came the last time, and knocked at the gate? But you did not open it.— Ah, Giudetta, what is the mystery that hangs over him? why must we never meet again? Tell me, I conjure you, who is he?”

Giudetta looked wonderingly at me; then pausing for a moment, answered in a slow and solemn voice, “Your brother!”

An instant dizziness came over me; voices rang in my ears, my eyes closed, and when I again opened them, I found myself in bed and my friend kneeling beside me, weeping and upbraiding herself for her cruel (as she called it) and inconsiderate disclosure. It was long before I could disentangle the twisted web that was wound round my heart, long before I could separate the mixed thread of my dark and sorrowful thoughts. My first impression was that of horror at my own guilt, my unwitting but heavy guilt. I thought I had sinned beyond redemption, but Giudetta’s affectionate reasoning at length reconciled me to myself.

After some time I found a solace, and at last a charm, in knowing that I had a brother, though we could never meet again. Friendless—but for my Giudetta—as I was, there was something dear to my heart in the certainty that one being existed with whom I could claim kindred; one to whom I could say that I in some degree belonged.

Giudetta told me, that in the first year of the Lady Almeria's marriage with my father, she had borne him a son. "Of the existence of this son, (she continued,) I do not think your mother ever was aware; nor did I know it until the evening when I first visited the unhappy person by whose death-bed it was my strange lot to watch. That forlorn creature was the Lady Almeria herself, and though her mind was alienated, and she seldom spoke but to utter wild fearful words of terrifying import, yet I soon discovered from those broken and incoherent mutterings, who and what she was. Her errors had doubtless brought her to the state of utter abandonment in which I found her; many and dreadful were those of which she hourly accused herself, and often would she call upon her son—her Henry, who at one moment she lamented as dead, and the next imagined present with her. She

had no belief in her heart,—no hope; and often as I have listened to her awful ravings, have I felt almost assured that she it was who had sat beside your mother at the fountain, and made known to her the misery of the infidel. Her height, her features, the singular colour of her hair, which time had not yet changed, all tallied with the description which Antonia had often given me of her fearful companion; and some words which she once uttered in her wanderings, about a poor Venetian woman who had wept and would have prayed with her, seemed to leave little doubt of it. O, if it really was so, what a lesson was there!

“But the awful death-bed—that was the lesson! Heaven preserve me from witnessing such another! O, the contrast between righteousness and crime! Your mother’s was the death-bed of a saint; heaven, as she herself said, seemed to open before her, and she fell asleep with the eyes of devoted affection, of watchful tenderness fixed upon her changing features. Her soul broke its mortal cerements in joyful expectation of divine mercy, and went to join the company of angels, for which the purification of sorrow meekly and unrepiningly borne, had fitted her. But Lady Almeria! those howling

agonies, those torments of despair, that heart-hardness that could neither trust or hope,—God preserve us, my Antonia, from the death of the unbeliever! may our last hour be unlike to hers upon whose dread, yet arrogant despair the iron curtain fell, which has no light behind it. Weak and erring we must be; but may we never lose our trust in Him, who suffered death for our redemption.

“When it became my duty to examine the few papers which Lady Almeria had left behind, and which chiefly related to events connected with your mother’s story, several intercepted letters from Lord Stanmore to his Antonia fell into my hands. From these, and especially from one, in which he details the circumstances that led to, and followed his first marriage, aided by other documents, I have been enabled to pursue the thread of those events which I have already related to you. Amongst those papers I found a small case, enclosing the miniature of a boy, whose resemblance to your father testified their close relationship; at the back of the setting was engraved the name of ‘Henry Waldgrave Villiers, son of Lord Stanmore and of the Lady Almeria, his wife.’ When I

returned home and opened the note which you had received in my absence, the initials H. W. V. startled me; and then I recollected that when I had seen the English stranger at Genoa, his likeness to your father had disturbed my mind, as if there had been an omen of evil in it. It was not a mere resemblance of features, but an air of the head, a sudden turn of expression, such as often identifies members of the same family, but is rarely observed to assimilate those who are strangers in blood. The coincidence of this likeness, with the circumstance of Lord Glenarden's being accompanied when at Venice by a young man, who afterwards quitted him just about the time when the stranger first appeared at Genoa, confirmed my fears. Under these circumstances, I resolved to prepare your mind for any thing which I might afterwards be obliged to communicate, by disclosing to you the events of your mother's life; at the same time determining to keep (at least for the present) the secret of your brother's existence, and probable identity with him who appeared to have already created a deeply rooted interest in your heart.

“ I requested an interview, in the intention of

obtaining such proof as might place the affinity I more than suspected beyond all doubt, but he was gone. I felt disappointed at failing in my purpose, but pleased that by his absence I was spared the necessity of revealing the extent and nature of my fears,—fears fully confirmed by the note which was brought to you on the evening of his departure. Read it, my Antonia, and judge if any further confirmation was necessary:—”

“An imperious duty compels me to quit Paris, without allowing me even the feeble consolation of looking once again upon the walls of your dwelling; within them I have vainly tried to be admitted, but I blame not the maidenly reserve which repels a stranger,—I can admire and respect the feeling from whose effects I suffer. At this moment my nearest relative, he to whom on earth I am most closely bound by every tie of duty as well as by my heart’s allegiance, lies on the bed of sickness; I fly to watch over him, and when Heaven has restored him to my prayers, which I trust will soon be, we will return together. Dare I hope that you will then listen to the pleadings of a heart that has but one thought, one wish? that asks but one sole good, one only blessing?—but such a blessing!

“ Think me not too presumptuous. Once before you were nearly lost to me for ever, by your sudden change of abode ; I tremble to think that circumstances may again cause you to quit the only spot where I have any chance of finding you. Is it too much to ask—to entreat the inestimable favour of a word, a single word from the hand of your respected friend ? The slightest indication will suffice to bring me to you to the uttermost part of the earth, and I beseech her to consider that he who asks this favour, does so with the humblest diffidence, the deeply respectful diffidence of real love, which neither pretends nor arrogates, but only hopes. Were it not for hope, how should I outlive this cruel separation ? how endure the desolating uncertainty, the drear monotony of absence ? Do not utterly extinguish it ; grant me the only boon I dare to ask ; think of the intense, the enduring misery into which your loss would plunge me,—grant it, and pardon my presumption, which is, in truth, but the courage of despair.”

On the envelope was written, “ A word (be it only one) addressed to H. W. Villiers, under cover to the Earl of Glenarden, Forest Lodge, Hampshire, will reach me wherever I may be.”

Here indeed was confirmation! and my dear friend, shuddering at the precipice on which I stood, and from which the hand of Providence seemed to have withdrawn me, again set forward to seek seclusion in some remote and unvisited spot, carefully obliterating as we journeyed along, all traces by which the direction we had taken could have been discovered.

—IX.—

The whole mystery was now unveiled,—the cruel mystery! Religion and virtue both forbade my dwelling on the past; the musing tendency to which I had too fondly given way, could now be no longer indulged in; I could no longer love my grief, and fondle it as I used to do. Exertion became a duty; I busied myself in the active occupations of a country life, and found in their cheerful variety a distraction from the morbid broodings of a too tenacious sensibility. Sometimes, when a sigh has risen, or a tear started to my eye, when pressed down by the memory of all that had saddened and discoloured the years of my

youth, I have felt as if the word *forlorn* had been made for me; the image of my dear mother has suddenly crossed my mournful dreams, her gentle spirit has seemed to watch round me, softly chiding my repinings and bidding me think of what she had suffered; and I have blushed at my weakness, and prayed for a better mind.

And my prayers, sincerely and devoutly offered up, were mercifully heard. I again became cheerful, and almost happy; my garden, my birds, my bees and dairy, amused and occupied me. I was a busy housekeeper, proud of my skill, and pleased to spread the table of my kind Giudetta with luxuries which owed their perfection to my care. I found myself nineteen without knowing how time had passed, or wishing for other enjoyments than those simple ones which my secluded life afforded, or society than that of my most dear Giudetta. But she would sometimes sigh, and call it a pity to see me blooming (it was her fond expression) in the desert, where none would ever come to know and love me; and then blame herself for throwing her fearful anticipations in the way of my unforeboding cheerfulness. It was too visible that her strength of mind gave way, and

that a sad idea, a dread that she should be taken, and I, her orphan care, be left alone in the world, occupied her thoughts, to the exclusion (too often) of more consoling images.

There was a song which I had learned in my childhood of a nun at Genoa. Dear Beatrice! I have never forgotten your sweet caressing smile, nor the sorrowful expression of your gentle eyes when you held me on your knee, and taught my infant notes to imitate the clear tones of your celestial voice. She had seen and suffered—poor Beatrice! and the song may have had something to do with her own sorrows, though she used to say it was her sister's story, but she was a nun then; and when I heard the recital of my mother's woes, I used to sing it, for it had some analogy to her sad fate. I can remember it still, that wild and plaintive measure, and these words that went with it:

Her life was made of love,
Berries, and birds, and flow'rs at first,
And then the sky above,
And clouds that golden musings nurst,
But still with love.

Had it been always so,
She had been watching now the stream's
Incessant flow,
In lone communion with such dreams
As angels know.

Her gentle hand would still
Have kindly propp'd the o'er-weigh'd stalk,
And the free thrill
Of soaring skylark cheer'd her walk
With sweet good will.

But in the grove,
(Berries, and birds, and flow'rs forgot,)
The sky above,
And leaves once green that now are not,
She rests, who was so sweet of thought,
Laid there by love !

Once, as I sat thrumming on an old guitar, and murmuring the ballad that I loved, Giudetta abruptly interrupted me.

“Do not, dearest Antonia,” she said, in a broken and tearful voice, “do not sing that air ; it oppresses my heart. Ah, that is your mother’s look ! Poor child, how unfit art thou to battle with the world,—to be without friend or stay ! Antonia, if I should die—”

The thought was awful, and I hurried her away from it, telling her sportively that sooner or later my knight would come, and gravely asking if she had ever either heard or read of peerless lady, whether wedged within the crevice of a rock by a wicked dwarf, or imprisoned in an enchanted castle by a grim giant, who was not in due time released by him to whom fate had given the clue.

“Do you hear that sound?” I exclaimed, as we cowered over the red embers of our half-exhausted fire. “Hark, it comes nearer! As I live, my knight is bewildered in the forest.”

“It is a hunter who has lost his way,” returned Giudetta; “he sounds his horn to bring the woodcutters to his assistance.”

“It is my knight,” said I laughingly; “I know the twang of his bugle.”

At the same moment, the report of a gun was heard in an approaching direction. Giudetta quitted the room to place a light in a high window fronting the quarter from which the sounds came, while our old Concierge opened the gate, and stood at it with a blazing fir-branch in his hand, directing its glare upon the most accessible path. Footsteps were now distinctly heard, and a moment after a man equipped in the garb of a hunter appeared, preceded by François who offered, in the name of his mistress, the hospitality of which the wanderer evidently stood in need.

I sat within the hollow of a screen, that formed a sort of fence round me and threw its shade on my face so as almost to conceal it; but his was distinctly revealed by the flame of a lamp which fell directly on it, bringing out a countenance of no

common interest. He was a man apparently of middle age, and of lofty stature ; the head of the old Italian cast, such as Dante might have imagined, or Titian called into life. Every thing about it was peculiar ; the hair, though visibly touched with grey, still waved in rich luxuriance over the proud and thoughtful forehead ; the eyes were sorrowful and sunken, but with a fitful light in them, that one moment flashed out brightly, and the next was lost in the darkness of habitual gloom. There was perhaps a touch of scorn, or it might be of misanthropy, in the curve of the finely chiselled lip ; but if a smile came, it quickly shifted to an expression of benign and natural courteousness,—and a smile did sometimes come,—but the wear and tear of the heart was visible through it.

There was no mistaking it,—no doubting that it was the head of one who had known the bitterness of sorrow and the nothingness of hope ; love had been there, and grief, and even despair. All had left traces ; but the present bearing was that of a man of noble aspect, the story of whose life was finished, and to whom the present was a form of existence to be endured, not joyed in.

I had ample leisure to contemplate the stranger's figure while he listened to the welcome transferred

by François from the lips of Giudetta, who begged that he would excuse her momentary absence, and offered him the shelter of her humble home. It was most thankfully accepted, but with an expression of uneasiness as to the fate of a companion from whom he had been accidentally separated in the intricacies of the forest, and François departed to send off a trusty guide in the direction which he was supposed to have taken.

I now advanced from within my screen, and placing a chair near to the fire, prayed the stranger to be seated. He started at the sound of my voice, and as he looked earnestly at me, I saw a bright flush mount into his cheeks, succeeded by an instant and ashy paleness. He tottered to a chair and dropped into it.

“You are ill, sir, I fear,” said I. “How can I assist you?”

He did not answer, but continued to gaze upon me with a steadfast look that became awful, and glazed the blood in my veins; I could not withdraw my eyes from his face, though its expression seemed to grow supernatural. At length he recovered a little; a tinge of life coloured his marble lips; he made an effort to excuse his agitation. It was a likeness, he said,—a strange, a wonderful

likeness, to one whom he had fondly, doatingly loved,—his long-bewailed Antonia. I started.

“ My name, too, is Antonia,” I exclaimed.

“ And your mother ? ”

“ Alas ! I have no mother—”

“ But your father ? ”

“ He too is dead ! ”

At this moment Giudetta entered, and not noticing me, advanced to greet her guest ; but the moment her eyes met his, she uttered a loud shriek, and sunk down half fainting on the ground. The object of her terror raised her gently up, and in a sweet re-assuring voice entreated to know the cause of her alarm. “ Perhaps (he said with a melancholy smile) some strange resemblance—such as that young lady bears to——But, good God ! what’s this ? Do my eyes mock me ? No, it is—it is Giudetta ! ”

There are minutes in life in which an eternity of feelings is condensed, minutes that defy all words—all memory, that can neither be distinctly remembered or described. Such were those which followed : the dead had come to life, the lost were found ; ties forcibly and cruelly riven were reknit, and fresh affections burst up and blossomed in the barren heart, like springs bubbling in the desert.

It was my father! What volumes were contained in that single word to the heart of one who believed herself an orphan! Giudetta stood before him in mute amazement; she asked no question, but there she stood, as though she feared that even one word of wonder would have destroyed the charmed life, of whose breathing reality she still doubted, even against the evidence of her senses.

—X.—

My father's first words were of my mother. Words of anguish, of tenderness, of self-upbraiding sorrow, never can I forget ye! I hung breathlessly on the passionate eloquence of his deep despair, his intense contrition, his almost idolatrous fondness; and when he pressed me to his widowed heart, and spelt the lines of my agitated features, as if to retrace in their faint and imperfect copy something of the character of my mother's beauty, I felt as if the benediction of heaven rested on me, and my heart asked no other form of happiness than that which the privilege of sharing and (as I hoped) soothing his sorrows, bestowed upon me.

Giudetta traced a rapid outline of my mother's story, softening the cruel details with the considerate artifices of friendship; and while she told of the trials of her whom she had so faithfully loved, gave, without intending it, the history of her own devoted and unwearied heart. And then my father talked of that happy forest (as he used to call his English solitude) where he had left her in health and loveliness, little thinking that in this world they were to meet no more. "She looked as you do now, Antonia," he said; and then he shuddered as if I too might be lost to him, and felt how much easier it was to fall back from joy to discouragement, than to step out from sorrow into the lightness of joy. And then he explained to us his unfortunate and mysterious absence, (that absence which sealed my mother's fate,) and how it was occasioned by the sudden arrival of Lady Almeria in England, and the intimation which he had received of her hostile intentions.

For a little while he had found in my mother's letters all the comfort of which the languor of absence was susceptible; but at length one came in which she expressed her doubts as to the fidelity of her servant Caterina, whom she seemed to have

some reason for supposing in the interest of Lord Glenarden, and entreated him not to write until she had assured him that he could do so with safety. His last letter (she added) had been evidently opened, and others had probably shared the same fate.

“Her apprehensions,” continued my father, “appeared to me vague and unfounded; but I knew her sensitive nature, and submitted for a little while to the imposed privation. This letter was (as I have since discovered) a vile trick, but so ingeniously, and delicately fabricated, that I did not then suspect the foul deceit. I endured ten lingering days without hearing any thing more of my Antonia, pining for her dear society, yet unable to disengage myself from the trammels which the bold and persevering claims of Lady Almeria had thrown about me. To remain longer silent was impossible. I wrote, but there came no answer; I wrote again, and repeatedly,—I dared even to make the long and fatally withheld confession,—dared to lay open the secret of my wretched marriage, and to implore her forgiveness; still not a word. I could no longer endure it,—no longer support a separation, the bitterness of which was unalleviated even by the intercourse of letters. I

prepared to leave London immediately; but just as my carriage drove up to the door, my father entered. He affected mystery, and wished to speak with me in private. I dismissed a person who happened to be present, and waited restlessly for his communication.

“How it was made, I have never since recollected. When I again began to feel the sensation, though scarcely the consciousness of existence, I had a confused sense of something horrible weighing me down, but I could not trace it back. I felt all the agonies of despair; but when I tried to remember what had happened, I groped in the dark, I felt like one who in some dreadful dream seems to himself as though he walked alone in the rocking heavens, not knowing where he treads or what surrounds him; darkness above, below,—thick and enclosing darkness, with now and then a lurid flash lighting it up, and bringing out shapes of horror—hideous and unnatural semblances—that sail by, flapping their heavy wings and uttering shrieks of despair. O misery drear and undefined! chaos more horrible than the distinctest revelation of torments! But at last, though by slow degrees, the truth came upon me. I remembered that some one, (I do not think my father said who the person

was,) had abruptly told my Antonia of my early marriage; had told her too, that feeling my affection for Lady Almeria revive, I had favoured her views, and shown myself anxious to shake off the Italian woman who had followed me to England; had made her believe all that was false and execrable; and that she in her distraction had fled with her child, had been traced to a sea-port, from whence she had embarked for Trieste, and in that Gulph had perished. The ship had gone down in the tremendous hurricane of the 17th of October, in which the Venetian man-of-war, *Il Redentore*, had been lost with all her crew, and not one soul (so went their horrible tale) was saved to tell the doleful story.

“The dreadful revulsion of nature which followed the return of consciousness, reduced me to the brink of the grave, on which I hovered long and doubtfully. While I lay waiting and wishing for death, I dictated a letter to Giuseppe, in whom—villain though he proved—I then placed implicit confidence, requiring a minute detail of every circumstance relative to my heart’s treasure; and received, too soon, what I believed to be full confirmation of all that had before been so barbarously imposed upon me.”

My father continued to retrace to us his mental agonies and final despair. Years, he said, dragged on drearily ; one white spot alone illuminated the desolate space,—the total overthrow of Lady Almeria's wicked project, and the public acknowledgment of my dear mother's honourable marriage.

Lord Glenarden, bitterly disappointed in his designs, scorned by the world, and finding the hope of engaging his son in another alliance totally frustrated, took to a life of profound seclusion. The voice of conscience, which might have been stifled for a time in the turmoil of society, made itself loudly heard in the solitude of the chamber ; it knelled out its appalling larum, and his shuddering soul sunk into the horrors of anticipated retribution.

His solitary night-walks by the sea-shore, or on the high and trackless mountains ; his lone companionship with the stars, on which he would often gaze for hours, as if he tried to find in their calm aspect the secrets of the future ; his hollow eye and haggard cheek, awakened conjecture. Some talked of deeds foul and deadly, and others lowered their voices, and spoke of unearthly communings and unhallowed visitants.

This state could not long continue. Lord Glenarden's frame wasted rapidly, and death stood in visible identity beside him. Then it was, when the dignities of this world appeared in all their nakedness, that he sent for my father; and humbling himself before him with the deep contrition of a guilty but awakened spirit, offering up its proud and self-awarding feelings in eager atonement, told him all!—told him how he had himself inflicted the cruel blow, had written the fatal letter which had sent out his young and innocent victim with her helpless child upon an unknown world, and reduced his son to utter wretchedness; and having thus disburdened his racked mind of its awful secret, died forgiven by that son whose heart had been blighted by his treachery.

It was not till after many years that my father was undeceived as to the fabricated tale of my mother's death; he long continued to believe us lost in the hurricane off the Gulph of Trieste. Either Lord Glenarden had been himself duped by some false report of his vile agents, or his memory wandered on his death-bed, and had forgotten all else in the sharp and absorbing remembrance of his own eminent crime, for he did not recur to it.

It was not until early in the same year in which Giudetta and myself quitted Genoa, that my father was led by an accidental circumstance to doubt the certainty of my mother's death. Being in company with some travellers just returned from Italy, he happened to be addressed as Lord Stanmore by some one who was not aware of Lord Glenarden's death, and his consequent change of title. The name appeared to arrest the attention of a person present, a blunt man of rough speech, who, turning abruptly to my father, said, "You are alive, my lord; therefore it could not have been for you that I once saw bitter tears shed, and by bright eyes, too. It was in Italy—"

"In Italy!" exclaimed my father.

"Yes, at Genoa."

"Good heaven!—when? where?"

"Some few years ago on board the *Friendship*, then lying within the Mola,—I recollect it well,—a lady came on board closely veiled, and engaged berths for herself and friend; the vessel was clearing out for sea, and I was there on the same errand. I remember that she waited for something, and took up an English newspaper to beguile the time; the death of Lord Stanmore was mentioned in it. I shall never forget her shriek!—those southern

women are desperate screamers. It rung in my ear all night ; and then, poor soul, she rushed from the deck, and I heard her convulsive sobs as the boat rowed off. I could learn nothing more of her than that she was a stranger unknown at Genoa, who had taken a passage for England for herself, her friend, and a child ; and—”

“ But what became of her ? ” interrupted my father eagerly.

His rough informer saw that he had touched a chord to which the heart of the inquirer responded tremblingly ; his voice softened as he replied, “ I never could discover. The circumstance interested me, and when I returned to Genoa some months after, I tried many means to obtain information on the subject ; but could only learn that the ladies in question had not been seen again, and were supposed to have gone to Venice.”

On this imperfect hint my father instantly acted ; passed over to Trieste, visited Venice, explored every winding of its most intricate recesses,—every hamlet, almost every hut on the neighbouring land, penetrated every where, but could find no trace of her for whom he sought. From thence he wandered into Lombardy, Piedmont, and on to

Genoa, meeting always with the same ill success ; and was returning to France upon some wild hope which chance held out to him, when descending the Jura at night, his carriage was overturned and he received a severe contusion, which for a time threatened serious consequences.

The effects of this accident detained him for some time in a village at the foot of the mountain ; and there chance brought him in contact with an Italian, who had traversed Europe in the double capacity of courier and contrabandist. This man who, in virtue of his avowed calling, professed garrulity, used to pass my father's window every morning, and always stopped to throw off a few words of light-hearted gossip, and to make good-natured inquiries after his then rapidly improving health.

One day he chanced to speak of Venice. My father listened, for the sound had a charm in it ; and Filippo, pleased to have an auditor, began to dole out some long story of his boyish days, when he was a merry page in the household of Count Vicenzio Loredano : my father's attention quickened. Filippo spoke of his young mistress, the Lady Antonia, swearing by Bacchus and Diana that she had not left her like upon the earth. " Ah,

my lord, (he exclaimed,) you should have seen her ! The Holy Virgin had given her a face, with a heart to match it ; but (added he, changing his light tone to one of solemn feeling,) she is gone !—she is a star in heaven !”

“ She was shipwrecked,” said my father, mastering his strong emotion, and in a tone of inquiry, “ in the Gulph of Trieste ?”

“ Certainly not,” said the man, decisively. “ She died some three or four years ago in an obscure place, but where I know not. Of her death I am sure, for I had the news of it from the relative of her friend, the Signora Giudetta,—old Bartolo Diedo, the learned counsellor, who told it me himself when he lay on his death-bed. It all came (he said) of her marrying a heretic ; but she is a saint in heaven, (added Filippo gravely, and touching his cap,) though none have been paid to say masses for her soul.”

At this moment a voice called “ Filippo !” across the road, and my father was left alone, despoiled of his last hope, and with the wretched certainty that had he earlier discovered the base deception practised on him, he might have saved his Antonia. But he had still a child, and as soon as his strength

returned, he set out once more upon his almost hopeless search.

“And who then,” said Giudetta, unable to restrain her vehement anxiety, “who was that Lord Stanmore, of whose death I read?”

A shade passed over my father's face as he answered, “That person was my son,—poor Henry! It was the wish of Lord Glenarden that he should live entirely with him, and be as much as possible estranged from me, both in heart and person. Perhaps I was to blame in yielding; but my adoration for my Antonia, and the fatal mystery—” At this moment a horn sounded, announcing the return of the strayed hunter. “It is my nephew, (said my father,) the son of a dear brother, now no more. My Antonia never knew that brother,—would that she had! His kind nature and fine sense would have saved us both from ruin; but smitten with the love of travel and adventure, he had quitted England when a youth, and did not return till after the death of his father.

“He came back the widower of a foreign wife,—an angel he said,—bringing with him this boy; but he staid not long with us, his spirit soon re-

joined that of his wedded love, his gentle Ermelin. With his latest breath he prayed me to protect his son, and never was child dearer to a father's heart than he is to mine. I bespeak your affection for him, my Antonia, as for a brother; he has the noble mind, the tender and passionate heart of his father,—the constant heart. When we sit together on some long evening, I will tell you how fondly, how faithfully he has loved, and all that he has suffered, all that he has resisted, for the sake of a fair Italian girl, who I fear is lost to him for ever. The story will interest you,—but you are pale, you tremble; the emotions of this night have been too much for you. You must retire, my love; and yet, (he added, as he pressed me to his heart,) it is hard to part so soon with my newly discovered treasure.”

As he uttered these words the door opened. I felt that the decisive moment was come; my cheek glowed, I averted my face, but the first sound! O, how joyfully my heart answered to it! I raised my eyes, caught the never-to-be-forgotten look, and burst into tears.

Then came the joy of recognition, the surprise, the inquiry, the explanation. My father felt, as

the light broke in upon him, that a ray of hope, reflected from the happiness of those he loved, might still play on his heart, and I hid my face on dear Giudetta's bosom, blushing to find my playful prophecy fulfilled, and my true knight come at last.

After a day or two of strong excitement, of tears and joy, of wretched and of tender recollections, our hearts seemed to settle calmly into happiness. Even my father's habitual melancholy began to assume a less morbid character; it was still the deep and settled grief of memory, the indelible past was always there, but a feeling that promised—not happiness, but rest from sorrow, began to mingle with it. Sometimes we sat and talked the sun down; now dwelling on the past, and now on the future, as if life were given us but to gather up the links of memory, and join them to those of hope. What a home for affection and confidence to dwell in was our forest nook! “And what a spot (said my father) to sit and tell old stories in,—such stories as the legend of true love I once promised you, Antonia. It was of an English knight, who wooed a fair Italian lady,—O! you have heard the tale, and pitied it, too,—I read it in your eyes;

but pity, dear Antonia, is a barren feeling. I claim for my hero a hand with a heart in it:—shall it be so, my love?”

And so it was. And as I sit in my home paradise, with the dear actors in my simple story round me, I look with a proud, fond feeling at my true knight, and bless the holy eve when I knelt before the high altar in the church of Saint Stephen's at Genoa.



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